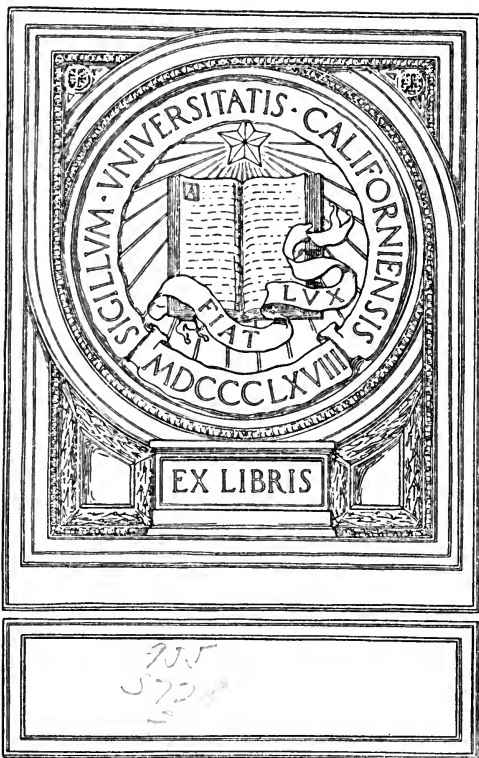


For WHOSE & SAKE



BY MRS. SOUTHWORTH

Robert P. Utter.





FOR WHOSE SAKE?

A SEQUEL TO "WHY DID HE WED HER?"

By MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

Author of

"Lilith," "The Unloved Wife," "Em," "Em's Husband,"
"Ishmael," "Self-Raised," Etc.



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52 Duane Street - - - - - New York

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FOR WHOSE SAKE

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FOR WHOSE SAKE?

CHAPTER I

A STARTLING RENCONTRE

TWO TRAVELERS on board the ocean steamer *Scorpio*, bound from New York to Liverpool, were Gentleman Geff and his queenly bride.

He was in blissful ignorance that his forsaken wife and her infant were on the same ship.

The wife whom he believed to be in her pauper grave in potter's field, and the child of whose birth he had never heard!

Gentleman Geff was riding on the topmost wave of success and popularity. He had paid a high price for his fortune, but he told himself continually that the fortune was worth all he had given for it.

Certainly there were two awful pictures that would present themselves to his mental vision with terrible distinctness and persistent regularity.

The first was of a deep wood, in the dead of night, and a young man's ghastly face turned up to the starlight.

The other was of a silent city street, in the dark hours before day, and a girl's form prone upon the pavement, with a dark stream creeping from a wound in her side.

There were moments when the murderer would have given all that he had gained by his crimes to wake up and find that they had all been "the phantasmagoria of a mid-night dream"; that he was not the counterfeit Randolph Hay, Esquire, of Haymore, with a rent roll of twenty thousand pounds sterling a year, and an income from invested funds of twice as much, and with two atrocious

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murders on his soul, but simply the poor devil of an adventurer who lived by his wits, and was known to the miners as Gentleman Cuff.

At such times he would drink deeply of brandy, and under its influence find all his views change. He would philosophize about life, fortune, destiny, necessity, and try to persuade himself that he had been more sinned against than sinning." He then felt sure that, if he had been born to wealth, he would have been a philanthropist of the highest order, a benefactor to the whole human race; would have founded churches, and sent out missionaries; would have established hospitals and asylums, and erected model tenement houses for the poor.

Ah! how good and great a man he would have proved himself if he had only been born to vast wealth! But he had been born to genteel poverty. Fate had been unkind. It was all the fault of fate, he argued.

In this exaltation he would go into the gentlemen's saloon, sit down at one of the gaming tables, and stake, and win or lose, large sums of money; and so, in the feverish mental and physical excitement of drinking and gambling, he would seek to drive away remorse.

Often he would drink himself into a state of maudlin sentimentality, and in that state reel into the stateroom occupied by himself and his bride. He was really more "in love" with Lamia Leegh than he had ever been with any woman in his long career of "lady-killing." He had married her for love, although it was the Turk's love.

But Lamia did not love him in the least. She had married him for rank, money and position. She had begun by liking him, then enduring him, and now she ended by detesting him.

"Some poor girls marry old men for money; some marry ugly men or withered men for the same cause; but to marry a drunkard for that, or for any cause; to be obliged to live with the beast; to be unable to escape from him; to see him day and night; to smell his nauseous breath—it is horrible, abhorrent, abominable!" she said to herself.

Yet she never dared to let her disgust and abhorrence appear to its object. She was too politic to offend him, for—he held the purse strings. There had been no settlements—nothing of the sort—notwithstanding all the talk about

them with Will Walling. For every dollar she would receive she must depend on her husband.

The Cashmere shawls and sable furs and solitaire diamonds that she longed for, if she should get them at all, must be got from him, and she knew she would get them, and everything else she might want, so long as he should possess his fortune and she retain his favor. So she veiled her dislike under a show of affection, and she even made for herself a rule and set for herself a task, so that he might never find out her real feelings toward him.

The more disgusted she might really be, the more enamored she would pretend to be.

This was surely a very hard way of earning diamonds and the rest, but, like Gentleman Geff, she told herself that they were worth it; and she thought so.

Their fellow passengers all knew them to be a newly married pair; for there happened to be a few New York "society" people on the ship, who had heard all about the grand wedding at Peter Vansitart's, and they had spread the news in the first cabin.

Their fellow voyagers also believed them to be a very happy couple; though ladies sometimes whispered together that he certainly did look rather dissipated; and gentlemen remarked to each other that it was a pity he drank so hard and played so high. It was a bad beginning at his age, and if it should continue Haymore fortunes could scarcely "stand the racket."

But notwithstanding these drawbacks, Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay were very popular among their fellow voyagers.

The weather continued good for the first week.

The bride and groom were daily to be seen on deck—well wrapped up, for the fine October days were cold on mid-ocean.

Yet though they were every day on deck, they had never yet encountered Jennie.

How was that? And where was Jennie?

Jennie Montgomery was in her stateroom, so prostrated by seasickness that she was scarcely able to take care of her child. She had never once left her room even to go into the ladies' saloon, but passed her time between her lower berth and her broad sofa.

Stewardess Hopkins became interested in poor little

Jennie and her baby—"one as much of a baby as t'other," she had said to one of the stateroom stewards—and so she showed them kindness from a heartfelt sympathy, such as no fee could have purchased.

On the eighth day out, Mrs. Hopkins was in the room with the young mother and child, when Jennie, looking gratefully at the stewardess, said, with tears in her eyes:

"Oh, Mrs. Hopkins, I do thank you with all my heart, but feel so deeply that that is not enough. I shall never, never be able to repay you for all your goodness to me."

"Don't talk in that way, my dear," replied the stewardess, in self-depreciation.

"If it were not for you, I believe that I and baby should both die on the sea."

"Oh, no, dear. 'The Lord tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' and if I hadn't been here He would have provided some one else for you. But now, dear, I do really think you ought to try and exert yourself to go up on deck. Here we are a week at sea, and you have had no enjoyment of the voyage at all. Don't you think, now that the baby has gone to sleep, and is safe to be quiet for two or three hours, you could let me wrap you up warm and help you up on deck?"

"I should like to do so, but I am not able; indeed I am not. I am as weak as a rat."

"Rats are remarkably strong for their size, my dear, for they're all muscle. And as for you being weak, it is only a nervous fancy, caused by your seasickness. But you're over that now. And if you will only let me help you up on deck, why, every step you take and every breath you breathe will give you new life and strength," persisted the stewardess.

"Well, I will go."

Jennie stood up, holding by the edge of the upper berth for support, while the stewardess prepared her to go up on deck.

And when last of all Jennie was well wrapped up in her fur-lined cloak, Mrs. Hopkins led and supported her to the stairs, and took her carefully up to the deck, and found her a sheltered seat on the lee side.

"Sit here," she said, "and every breath of this fresh air you breathe will give you new life."

And having tucked a rug well around the feet of her charge, the stewardess left Jennie to herself.

Jennie looked around her. There were very few people within the range of her vision, only the man at the wheel and two or three deck hands.

It was the luncheon hour, and nearly all the passengers who were not in their staterooms had gone to the dining saloon.

Then Jennie looked abroad over the boundless expanse of dazzling blue sea, leaping and sparkling under the light of a radiant blue sky. It was splendid, glorious, but blinding to vision just out of the shadows of the stateroom and cabin, and so Jennie closed her eyes to recover them, and sat with them closed for some moments. At this hour it was very quiet on deck. Only the sounds of the ship's movements were heard. Jennie, with her tired eyes shut, sat there in calm content.

"Oh! I am going mad! I am going mad! It has taken shape at last—or is this—delirium tremens? I—must not—drink so much!"

It was a low, husky, shuddering voice that uttered these strange words in Jennie's hearing.

She opened her eyes at the sound, looked up and saw——

Rightly Montgomery, her husband, within a few feet of her, staring in horror upon her, while he supported himself in a collapsed state against the bulwarks of the ship. The face that confronted her was ashen, ghastly, awe-stricken, yet defiant, as with the impotent revolt of a demon.

Jennie returned his glare with a gaze of amazement and perplexity.

And so they remained spellbound, staring at each other, without moving or speaking, for perhaps a full minute.

Jennie was the first to recover herself. A moment's reflection enabled her to understand the situation—that Rightly Montgomery, under his new name and with his new wife, was her fellow passenger on the *Scorpio*. This was clear enough to her now.

She was also the first to break the spell of silence, though it cost her an effort to do so, and her voice quivered, and she lowered her eyes as she said:

"You seem to take me for an optical illusion."

He still glared at her without answering.

"I am no 'illusion,'" she continued, more steadily, gaining more self-control every moment.

"If not—what—in the devil—are you?" he gasped at length, terrified, yet aggressive.

"I am your wife; but shall never claim, or wish to claim, the position," she replied, still keeping her eyes down to avoid the pain of seeing his face.

"You are—I do not—I thought—— How——" he began, in utter confusion of mind, and with his eyes starting from the intensity of his stare.

"Go away, please, and collect yourself. Do not fear me. I shall not trouble you. But pray, go now, and do not come near me or speak to me again," said Jennie.

"But I thought—you were dead!" he blurted out, with brutal bluntness.

Jennie reflected for a moment. Why should he have thought that she was dead, even though he had tried to kill her, and had indeed left her for dead? Then she concluded that he must have fled from the city immediately after having committed the crime by which he had intended to rid himself of her forever; but she made no reply to his remark.

"Why have you followed me here?" he demanded, trying to cover his intense anxiety with an air of bravado.

"I did not follow you. I did not know that you were to be on this boat. How should I have known it? And why should I have followed you?" she calmly inquired.

"How is it—that you are here, then?" he questioned, his voice still shaking, his eyes staring, his form supported against the bulwarks of the ship.

"I am going home to my father's house. When I got well in the Samaritan Hospital a few good women of means clubbed together and raised the funds to give me an outfit and pay my passage to England. They engaged for me one of the best staterooms in the ladies' cabin."

"How is it—that I have never seen you—or suspected your presence on the ship before? Have you been hiding from me?"

"No; I have already told you that I did not know you were on board. You have not seen me because I have been seasick in my stateroom. This is my first day on deck. And now will you please to go away and leave me?"

"Presently. By Jove, Jennie, you take things very coolly!" he exclaimed, drawing a handkerchief from his breast pocket and wiping his forehead, on which beads of

perspiration stood out. "What do you intend to do?" he suddenly demanded.

"Nothing to trouble you while you are on this ship. I do not wish to see, or speak to, or even to know you here again, and I will not."

"I—well—I thank you for so much grace. But what will you do after you shall have reached England?"

"I shall tell my father the whole story—of which he has no suspicion now—and I shall place myself in his hands for direction, and do whatever he counsels me to do. He was my guard and guide all my life until I threw off his safe authority and followed you."

"Pity!" muttered Gentleman Geff to himself.

"And now," said Jennie, "once more, and for the third time, I beg you to leave me. Let this distressing and most improper interview come to an end at once. I think it is both sinful and shameful, in view of the past and the present, for you to speak to me, or even to look at me. Perhaps I am doing wrong in keeping quiet. Perhaps I ought to denounce you to the captain and officers of this ship."

"That would be quite useless, my girl," exclaimed Gentleman Geff, daring to speak contemptuously for the first time during the interview, yet still quaking between the conflicting passions of terror and defiance; "you could not prove anything against me here."

"Probably not; and my interference would not only be useless, but worse than useless; it would make an ugly scandal, and create a great disturbance. No, I will do nothing until I take counsel with my father. But let me give you this warning: My father is to meet me at Liverpool. Do not let him see you then! And now, Capt. Montgomery, if you do not leave me, I shall be obliged to go to my room," Jennie concluded.

Gentleman Geff turned away. It was time, for people were leaving the dining saloon and coming up on deck.

Several people—men, women and children—passed Jennie on their way forward; nearly every one of these glanced at Jennie with more or less interest; for hers was a new face. Now, in the beginning of a sea voyage nearly all the passengers are strangers to each other. But after eight days, when every one on board is known to the other by sight, a new face is an event. And this face was fair,

pensive and interesting, and it belonged to a young woman who seemed to be quite alone on board.

Among those who passed was a superbly beautiful woman, whose Juno-like form was wrapped in a rich fur-lined cloak, the hood of which was drawn over her lovely head, partly concealing the glory of her red, gold-hued hair, and half shading the radiance of her blond and blooming complexion.

This goddess did something more than glance at the pretty, pale, child-like form reclining there. She stopped and gazed at her for a moment, and then, when Jennie lowered her eyes, the goddess passed on.

When the stream of passengers had all gone forward Jennie drew a sigh of relief and composed herself to rest and to think over the sudden, overwhelming interview which had just passed between herself and her husband.

Jennie was troubled, not in her affections—for if Kightly Montgomery had not succeeded in slaying her, he had certainly managed to kill her love for him—but in her conscience. Was she right in letting him go on in his course of evil? Ought she not to stop it? But could she, even if she tried? And she shrank from trying. For if she should succeed in exposing him, what a terrible mortification it would be to that unfortunate young lady whom he had feloniously married; who was reported to be as religious and charitable as she was beautiful and accomplished; who, even in the busy week before her wedding day, had given time to go out shopping for her—Jennie's—outfit; and whom it was now too late to save, since she had been living with her supposed husband for a week.

To expose him now, and here, would be to degrade her before all the ship's passengers, so that all who now admired, honored or envied her, would soon pity and avoid her.

Jennie could not bring an "unoffending" fellow creature to that pass; and if her forbearance was a sin, she hoped the Lord would pardon her for His sake who pitied the sinful woman.

While Jennie was "wrestling" so in the spirit, the stewardess came up and put her baby in her arms, smiling, and saying:

"As I was passing by your stateroom I just looked in to

see if all was right, and then I saw this little thing lying wide awake and crowing to herself as good as pie. And I thought I would wrap her up and bring her to you for a breath of this good, fresh air, which, if it was doing you good, wouldn't do her harm. Was I right?"

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Hopkins. And I thank you so much," said Jennie, as she stooped and kissed the babe that lay upon her lap; but Mrs. Hopkins had already gone about her business.

Jennie smiled and cooed to the little one, enjoying its presence, and rejoicing that Kightly Montgomery was gone from her side and was not likely to return. She had purposely avoided speaking of the child to him. She was glad that he had not once inquired about it. She had almost a superstitious dread of his seeing, touching or even knowing of the babe, for fear that his evil nature might, in some moral, physical or, perhaps, occult way, bring harm to the little innocent.

She was still bending over the babe, when a soft, sweet, melodious voice addressed her.

"Pardon me, you are Mrs. Montgomery, are you not?"

Jennie looked up. The goddess had come back. Jennie did not know her, but she answered quietly:

"Yes, madam."

"I am Mrs. Randolph Hay; and that I had heard of you and become interested in you must be my excuse for intruding my acquaintance on you," added the beauty, with a bewitching smile.

Jennie flushed, paled, trembled and cast down her eyes.

This, then, was Lamia Leegh, the unfortunate young lady whom Kightly Montgomery had married!

Jennie felt sorry for her, standing there in all the pride and pomp of her beauty and wealth.

"You are very kind, madam," was all that she could find to say, in a low tone, with downcast eyes and flushed cheeks.

The goddess thought the little woman overpowered by her own grandeur, smiled condescendingly, and said complacently:

"What a pretty baby you have! Girl or a boy?"

"Girl, madam."

"That is right. I love girl babies. What is her name?"

"She is not christened yet."

"How old is she?"

"Two months on the third of this month, madam."

"Ah! She is well grown for that age. I need not ask if she has good health. She looks so well."

"Oh, yes, madam. Thank Heaven!"

"This is the first time you have been on deck, I think?"

"Yes, madam."

"Suffered from seasickness, I fear."

"Yes, madam, until this morning."

"Ah! very sad to have missed all this beautiful voyage. An exceptionally fine voyage. I have crossed many times, but have never experienced so fine a voyage."

Jennie did not reply.

"But, then, seasickness is a great benefit to some constitutions. I hope that it will have been so in your case."

Still Jennie did not answer, except by a bow.

"Have you quite recovered?"

"Quite, ma'am, thank you."

"Yet you feel weak?"

"Yes, madam."

"That will pass away. You are traveling quite alone, I believe."

"Yes, madam."

"Then, if I or Mr. Randolph Hay can be of any service to you, I hope you will call on us. I, and I am sure Mr. Hay also, would be very much pleased to serve you."

"I thank you, madam, very much, but my dear father will meet me at Liverpool, so that I shall not need assistance. But equally I thank you."

Jennie would have said more had she been able. She would have acknowledged the services or the supposed services the lady had performed for her before they had ever met; but her tongue "clove to the roof of her mouth," so to speak. It was all she could do to utter the perfunctory words she had spoken, and these without raising her eyes to the face of the goddess.

Mrs. Randolph Hay bowed graciously, and passed on toward the cabin.

"Poor thing!" breathed Jennie, with deep pity; "poor, poor thing! She, so proud, so stately, so beautiful, to be cast down to the dust! Oh, no! Heaven pardon me, but I must spare him for her sake! I will do nothing until I

see my father, and then I must tell him all, and be guided by his counsels."

So then Jennie stooped and kissed her baby and felt at peace with all the world.

Lamia Leegh was not one to hide her "light under a bushel."

Before many hours had passed every one had heard the pathetic story of the English curate's young daughter, who had been married, deserted and months afterward half murdered by her husband; how she had been taken to the Samaritan Hospital, where she became a mother; how certain charitable ladies had become so interested in her case that they had made up a fund to give her and her child an outfit and send them home to her father, and how she was on this very ship.

Without claiming all the credit in so many words, Lamia Leegh had left the impression on the minds of her hearers that she herself had been the principal, if not the only, benefactress of Jennie Montgomery, and she won applause for her benevolence.

When Kightly Montgomery left his wife seated on the deck it was with a feeling of relief to get out of her presence. He hurried to his stateroom, looked around, and felt more relief to find that his deceived bride was absent.

He kept a private stock of strong old brandy in a case. He opened a bottle, poured out half a goblet full, and drank it at a draught.

Then he felt better still.

"She will keep her word," he said to himself. "If she had intended to give me away, she would have done so before this. Any man would have denounced another under such circumstances. But these women are inexplicable. I wonder if her child was born alive? I wonder if it is living, and if she has it with her, or if she has placed it in some asylum? Impossible to say. She volunteers no information on the subject, and I certainly cannot question her about it. She wishes me to avoid her. I am quite willing to oblige her in that particular. I very much do not wish to see her again. No, nor her father! I must not meet the dominie, under present complications. It would be awkward. I shall shirk that *rencontre* by getting off the

steamer at Queenstown and taking the mail route to London via Kingstown and Holyhead. That will do!"

He filled and drank another half goblet of brandy, and then sat staring at his boots.

Presently Lamia Leegh entered the stateroom. He looked up at her stupidly. His face was flushed, his eyes were fishy. The air was full of the smell of brandy. She knew that he had been drinking to intoxication; but she cared too little for him and too much for herself to notice this. He might drink himself to death, if he pleased, without any interference from her, so that he supplied her with plenty of money while he lived and left her a rich dower when he should die.

So, without seeming to notice his state, she sat down on the sofa by him and said, very pleasantly:

"You remember hearing me speak of that interesting young woman from the Samaritan Hospital for whom we furnished an outfit and engaged a stateroom in this cabin to send her home to her people?"

"What young woman? Ah! yes, I believe I do. What of her?" he drawled, with assumed indifference.

"I have just seen her and her child——"

"Child?" he echoed involuntarily.

"Yes; I told you she had a child, you remember."

"Aw—no—I didn't."

"Oh, yes. Such a pretty little girl baby! They have been shut up in their stateroom for a week on account of the mother's seasickness. She is out on deck to-day for the first time. When I saw a new face there I thought it was hers, but was not certain, so I passed her by. But a little later, when I saw the stewards place a young infant in her arms, then I felt almost certain, and I went up and spoke to her. A prodigal daughter, I fear she is, but a most interesting one, and her father is to meet her at Liverpool and——"

"Lamia," interrupted the man, "suppose we drop the subject. I am not at all interested in your charity girl." He yawned with a bored air.

"Oh, very well; what shall we talk about? The end of the voyage? Well, I heard the captain say that we shall be at Queenstown to-morrow morning."

"And we shall get off at Queenstown; do you hear?"

"At Queenstown? But why, when our tickets are for Liverpool?"

"Because I will it to be so!" said the man, in the sullen wilfulness of intoxication.

"Oh, very well! Quite right! So be it!" replied Lamia, with contemptuous submission.

And the discussion ended.

She loosened her dress and laid herself down on the lower berth to take an afternoon nap.

He sat on the sofa, with the brandy bottle before him, and drank and drank and drank.

That evening Gentleman Geff was much too drunk to go into the dining saloon, yet with the fatuity of drunkenness he insisted on doing so, and he reeled out of his stateroom and through the cabin and up the stairs. But had it not been for Lamia's strong support he could never have reached his seat at their table. Lamia was like Burns' Nanny:

"A handsome jaud and strang,"

and she succeeded in setting him safe in his seat, where he sat bloated, blear-eyed, and luckily stupid, instead of hilarious or quarrelsome. Every one at table noticed his condition, and—

"What a pity! What a pity!" was thought or whispered by one or another.

It was a severe ordeal for Lamia, yet the trial was softened by the thought that all the sympathies of the company were with her, all the condemnation for him.

She was glad at last when she succeeded in drawing him away from the table to the privacy of their stateroom, where he fell upon the sofa and sank into the heavy sleep of intoxication.

Lamia felt too bitterly humiliated to return to the saloon or go on deck, so she remained in the stateroom, reading a French book until it was time to retire.

Then she turned into her berth, leaving the stupefied inebriate to sleep off the fumes of his brandy, lying on the sofa dressed as he was.

Jennie Montgomery sat on deck with her baby on her knees until the fading day and the freshening breeze warned her to seek shelter in the cabin.

Then she took her child to her stateroom, where soon after both were rocked to sleep by the rolling of the ship.

It was a dark night, partly overclouded, and with but few stars shining.

A few passengers, all men, remained on deck to catch the first glimpse of land. Before midnight the man on the lookout made Cape Clear Lighthouse, and the ship ran along the coast of Ireland.

CHAPTER II

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

JENNIE slept late that morning, and was finally awakened by the cessation of the motion to which she had been accustomed day and night for the last nine days.

She started up and looked out.

The ship was at anchor in the fine cove of Cork, and the window of her stateroom commanded the harbor. She knew there was a crowd of people on deck, but she felt no disposition to join them; so after she had washed and dressed her child and herself she sat down and waited until the kind stewardess brought her some breakfast.

"Well, here we are at Queenstown," said the good woman, as she set down the breakfast tray.

"Thank you for bringing my breakfast, Mrs. Hopkins. How long will we remain here?" inquired Jennie.

"Only a few hours. The bride and groom—Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay, you know—have got off. I know they took their tickets for Liverpool, and here they have got off at Queenstown. Now they will go to London by way of Holyhead."

"Ah," said Jennie, only because she felt that she must say something.

"Very queer, I call it, for gentlemen and ladies to sacrifice their passage money in that way. But when people have more money than they know what to do with they do fling a good deal away, that's certain."

Jennie began to drink her coffee to avoid the necessity of speaking. She did not think it was queer that the pair

should have left the steamer at Queenstown, for she understood very well that Kightly Montgomery dared not face her father at Liverpool.

"Are they really off, Mrs. Hopkins?" she inquired at last. "Are you sure they have actually gone?"

"Went ashore in the boat half an hour ago. Took all their baggage from the stateroom, but left that which is in the hold—big trunks that must go to Liverpool, where they will claim them at the custom house, when they themselves get there by the mail route," replied the stewardess.

This was a great relief to Jennie. To know that Kightly Montgomery was really gone from the steamer, not to return, gave her a sense of freedom and security which she had not experienced since she had discovered his baleful presence on board. She felt now that she could go freely on the deck and take her child there, and enjoy all the delights of the voyage across the channel and up the Mersey, without the fear of meeting him or his deceived bride.

"I do not think, Mrs. Hopkins, that I shall trouble any one to bring my meals to me here after this. I shall go to the public table," she said.

"It would be much better for you, my dear," the stewardess replied.

"And now that I have finished breakfast, I will take baby and go up on deck."

"That will be better for you, too, my dear. Let me help you."

"Oh, no. I am quite well and ever so much stronger than I was yesterday. Besides, the ship is quite still, so you see I can walk steadily and carry baby."

But the stewardess resolutely took the child from the arms of the young mother and carried it up before her.

The deck was a crowded and busy scene. All the passengers were up there, gazing out upon the beautiful scenery. But crowded as it was, the people were nearly all standing, so it was easy for the stewardess to find a good seat for the mother, to whom, when comfortably arranged, she gave the child.

Her fellow passengers took but little notice of Jennie now; they were too much interested in other matters. She sat there and enjoyed the scene until the ship got under way again and stood out for the mouth of the Mersey.

This last day on board Jennie enjoyed the voyage very much. She spent nearly the whole day on deck, and left it with reluctance at night to retire to her stateroom. That night she could scarcely sleep for the excitement of anticipating her meeting with her father.

Nevertheless, she was up and out on deck early the next morning.

They were near the mouth of the Mersey. As soon as she had breakfasted she packed up all her effects, so as to be ready to go on shore as soon as the ship should land.

Then she sat on deck to watch the shores until at last the steamer drew near to the great English seaport and came to anchor.

A steam tender from the piers was rapidly approaching the *Scorpio*.

A great crowd of people were on board the tender, apparently coming to meet friends on the *Scorpio*.

Many field glasses were in active use in the hands of voyagers trying to make out the persons of their friends.

Jennie had no glass, but as she stood bending forward, straining her eyes to see, a gentleman near her said:

"Will you take my glass?"

She thanked him, and took it, adjusted the lenses to her sight, and held the instrument up to her eyes.

A cry of joy had nearly broken from her lips. She saw her father standing on the deck of the coming tender, looking well and happy. He, too, had a glass, and was using it. She saw that he had seen her; he took off his hat and waved it to her. She waved her hands.

The tender was drawing very near, and now came a general waving of handkerchiefs in salutation from the passengers on both steamers.

In another minute the tender was alongside, the gang-plank thrown down, and the rush of friends to meet each other made a joyous confusion.

Jennie found herself in her father's arms, scarcely knowing how she got there in such a crowd and confusion.

"My daughter! my daughter! welcome! welcome! welcome! welcome to my heart!" the father cried, in a breaking, choking voice, as he pressed her fondly to his breast.

"My own beloved father! Oh, thank the Lord—thank the Lord, that I see you again! And my mother!—my

darling mother!—how is she?” cried Jennie, sobbing for joy.

“Well, my dearest, well, thank Heaven! Sends fondest love to you, my child, and waits your return with a joyful heart.”

“Oh! how have I deserved this love and tenderness, this divine compassion and forgiveness? Oh! my father, I ought to fall—not on your neck—but at your feet, and say—what I feel! what I feel!—‘Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy child.’”

“Hush! my darling, hush! We will talk later. Let us go away from here as soon as possible. Where is your babe, Jennie?”

“In my stateroom, dear father, fast asleep. Will you come down with me and see her?”

“Yes, dear.”

The father and daughter struggled through the pressing crowd, and made their way slowly and with difficulty down into the cabin, which was now all “upside down” with ladies and ladies’ maids, and gentlemen and valets, stewards and stewardesses, getting together their “traps” and making ready to go on shore.

Jennie took her father directly to her stateroom, where the pretty babe lay sleeping on the lower berth.

Jennie lifted the babe and placed it in her father’s arms.

The minister received the child, raised his eyes, and solemnly invoked God’s blessing on it, then stooped and pressed a kiss upon its brow. Finally he returned the babe to its mother, saying:

“Wrap her up, my dear. We must hurry, or we shall miss the first return trip of the tender and have to wait for the second, which would cause us to lose our train.”

Jennie quickly folded the baby in the warm white cloak and hood which had been given her by the Duncan children.

“Now I will take her again and carry her for you. Do you take up your hand-bag and parasol. I will speak to have the other things brought after us,” said Mr. Campbell, as he led the way to the deck, carrying the babe, and followed by his daughter.

The passengers had all left the steamer.

Men were carrying baggage on board the tender. Mr.

Campbell spoke to one of them, directing him to the state-room of his daughter. Then, holding the babe on one arm, he gave the other to Jennie, and led her across the gang-plank and on board the tender, where by this time all the passengers were gathered.

In a few minutes the tender put off from the ship and steamed to the piers, where she soon arrived. The passengers swarmed out.

Mr. Campbell called a cab, put his daughter and her child into it, followed them and gave the order: To the Lime Street Railway Station.

When they reached the place the minister stopped the cab, got out and took the babe from her mother's arms, and led the way into a second-class waiting-room.

"You will stay here, my dear," he said, "while I go back to the custom house and get your baggage through. You will not mind?"

"Oh, no, dearest father. I shall not mind anything, except missing the sight of your dear face, even for a minute. It seems to me as if I should never bear to lose sight of you again."

"I shall come back as soon as possible, my dear," said the minister; and he found for her a comfortable seat, placed the baby in her arms, and so left her in the waiting-room.

Jennie sat there without feeling the time pass wearily, after all; her mind was too full of delightful anticipations of homegoing.

Nearly an hour passed, and then her father came hurrying in.

"It is all done, my dear. Your trunks are rescued from the custom house and deposited on the train, and now we have five minutes left in which to take some refreshments, if you would like," he said cheerfully.

"I want nothing, dear papa, for I have not very long since breakfasted. But you?" she inquired.

"No, dear; nothing for me. And now, my dear child, I have at length found breathing space in this hurry and confusion to ask about your husband. You did not name him at all in your letter, from which I argued ill; and if there had been time, I should have written to you for some explanation; but I knew that you were then to sail in a few days, and that you would reach Liverpool before my letter

could get to New York. Now, my dear, I must ask you some very serious questions."

"Yes, papa."

"How is it that you, the daughter of a clergyman of the Church of England, and the wife of an ex-captain in her majesty's army, should have been confined in the charity ward of a public hospital?"

Jennie shuddered, but did not answer.

"How was it that you had to be indebted to alms for your outfit and passage to this country? Why did you not mention your husband's name in your letter to me? Why are you here alone? Where is your husband? Tell me, child. Do not fear or hesitate to tell your father everything," he said, tenderly taking her hand.

"Oh, papa, your goodness goes to my heart. He has left me, papa," she said, and then suddenly lifting her soft, dark eyes, full of truth and candor, to meet her father's pitying gaze, she added: "But do not mind that, dear papa. I do not. The best thing he ever did for me was to leave me."

"Jennie!"

"Yes, papa dear, it was, indeed. I am not saying this from pride or bravado, but because it is the very truth itself, that the best thing he ever did for me was to leave me."

"Oh, Jennie!"

"Yes, papa."

"You do not care for him, then?"

"No, dear papa."

"And yet, my child, he is your husband still," said the minister.

"Unhappily, yes; but he has left me. It is the kindest act of his life toward me."

"And you never wish to see him again, Jennie?"

"Never, nor to hear of him. I am happy now in a quiet way. I wish for nothing better on earth than to live in a quiet way at the darling little parsonage with you and dearest mamma and my blessed baby."

Suddenly into the pathos and gravity of Jennie's face came a ripple of humor as she spoke of her child and looked at her father.

The Rev. James Campbell was certainly the youngest grandfather in England, if not in Europe. He was really but thirty-eight years old, and might have been taken for

a mere boy, for he was of medium height and of slight and elegant form, with a shapely head, pure, clean-cut classic features, a clear, fair complexion and dark chestnut hair, parted in the middle, cut rather short and slightly curling. He wore neither beard nor mustache. His dress was a clerical suit of black cloth of the cheapest quality and somewhat threadbare; but it perfectly fitted his faultless figure; but his linen collar and cuffs were spotless even after a railway journey in the second-class cars and his gloves were neatly mended.

Altogether he looked very young and even boyish, as we said, though he was in middle life and a grandfather.

But for the close resemblance between the father and daughter, their fellow passengers in the waiting-room must have taken them for a married pair, and "o'er young to marry also."

"But about this man, Jennie," he said, seeing that she paused. "Where is he now?"

"In Ireland, I believe, papa. It is a long story I have to tell when we get home. And—here is our train."

The whistle sounded, and the minister took his grandchild from his daughter and carried it, followed by its mother, to their seats in one of the second-class carriages.

CHAPTER III

HER WELCOME HOME

THE curate and his daughter found themselves in a crowded carriage of the second class, on the Great Northern express train from Liverpool to Glasgow. I say crowded, for though no one was standing up, yet many of the passengers had well-grown children on their laps.

Mr. Campbell and Jennie took the last two vacant seats.

"Give me the baby now, papa dear," said the little mother, holding out her arms, as soon as she had settled herself in her seat.

"No, dear, the child is sleeping. If she wakes and frets, I will hand her over to you; otherwise I will hold her to rest you," replied her father.

Their fellow travelers turned and looked at the young grandfather and the youthful mother, and very naturally drew false conclusions.

They were mostly of the class who listen, comment and observe.

"It's easy to see that is a young married pair, with their first child," whispered a fat, florid country woman, with one baby sitting on her knees and two on the floor at her feet.

"He won't be quite so fond of loading himself down with the kids when there's a dozen of 'em, maybe," replied her companion, a stout, brown woman with a burden of two heavy bundles and a basket on and about her.

The minister and his daughter heard every word of this whispered colloquy with slight smiles of amusement; but it warned them that they could not indulge in any very confidential discourse there, where every whispered word could be so distinctly heard.

All further explanations would have to be postponed until they should reach Medge Parsonage. And that was a hundred miles off as yet. Nothing but the commonplaces of conversation could pass between them.

"Are you quite comfortable, my dear?"

"Yes, thank you."

"You don't feel the draught from that window?"

"No, papa dear." Etcetera.

Jennie took particular pains to call her young father "papa" whenever she spoke to him.

But that did not enlighten their companions as to the true relations between the two. They thought it only one more silly affectation of the youthful parents. Many vain young mothers called their husbands "papa" for baby, as many proud young fathers called their wives "mamma" also for baby.

So merely trivial talk passed between the father and daughter until the train blew the steam whistle and "slowed" into the first station after leaving Liverpool, stopped ten seconds and sped on again.

Jennie had not seen her native country for two years, and she looked out at the vanishing station almost with the curiosity of a stranger, and then exclaimed with a look of astonishment:

"Why, papa! That was Huton!"

"Well, my dear!"

Jennie looked at her father in amazement.

"What is the matter, my dear?" inquired the curate.

"Matter? Why, papa, matter enough. We have certainly taken the wrong train. Huton is on the Great Northern, and not the South Eastern Railroad. This is not the way to Medge."

"But, dear, we are not going to Medge."

"Not going to Medge?"

"No, my dear."

Jennie stared.

"I also have something to tell you which I have reserved until now," said the minister gravely.

"What is it, papa? Oh, what is it?" demanded the young girl in sudden alarm. "You said my dear mother was quite well. If she were in heaven, you might say with truth she was quite well; but oh! how could I bear it! Oh, how could I bear it! Is she quite well in this world?"

"Quite well, here on earth, my dear. Compose yourself."

"Then what is it?"

"Nothing to alarm you, Jennie."

"Where are we going?"

"To Haymore, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, where I have a curacy."

"To Hay—— And you never told me!" said Jennie, aghast with astonishment. All her life, until her hasty marriage, two years before, she had lived with her parents at Medge. She considered them as fixtures to that spot. She would as soon have expected the old parish church and graveyard to be plucked up by the roots from Medge and transplanted to Haymore as to have her father and mother removed from the first to the last named place. "Haymore!" she said to herself—"Haymore!" Surely that was the name of the manor to which Kightly Montgomery had fallen heir. And in Yorkshire, too. It must be the same place! She and her father were going there! And—Kightly Montgomery, under his new name, and with his new bride, was also going there. The first as the lord of the manor, the second as pastor of the parish. What was to be done? They must surely meet, and then?" Jennie was dumfounded from consternation.

"Why, what ails you, Jennie, my child?" inquired her father.

She found her tongue at last, and said, because she did not know what else to say:

"You never told me."

"I explained that I reserved the information for our meeting," gently replied the curate.

"How long have you been at Haymore?" was her next question.

"About twelve weeks. Not quite three months. But don't look so horrified, my dear: If I had changed my religion, instead of having changed my parish, you could scarcely seem more confounded," said the curate, with a little laugh.

"Oh, papa dear, what made you leave dear old Medge?" she dolefully inquired.

"Necessity, Jennie. My old rector died——"

"Oh! Good old Dr. Twombly! Has he gone?" exclaimed Jennie in a tone of grief.

"Yes, dear—full of years and honors. It would be impious to mourn the departure of so sainted a man. His successor was a young Oxonian, who gave me warning and put in a classmate of his own as his curate."

"And what made you go so far—quite from the south to the north of England?"

"Again necessity, my dear. I was out of employment, and your mother and myself were living in cheap lodgings in the village, when I received a letter from Dr. Orton—an old friend of my father, who had heard of my misfortune—inviting me to come with my wife to Haymore and take his parish and occupy his parsonage for a year, during which he was ordered by his physician to travel for his health. I gratefully accepted the offer."

"And how do you like it, papa?"

"Very much, my dear. The rectory is a beautiful old house, very conveniently fitted with all modern improvements and very comfortably furnished. The house is covered with ivy and the porches with climbing plants. There is a luxuriant old garden, full of flowers and herbs and all kinds of fruits and vegetables that our climate will grow, and there is a lawn with old oak trees."

"How lovely!" impulsively exclaimed Jennie. But then her face fell.

"Yes, it is lovely," assented the minister, who had not noticed the change in his child's countenance. "And I like it so well that I shall grieve to leave it."

"Oh, but you are sure of it for a twelvemonth!" exclaimed Jennie, eager to please her father, yet again stopping short at the sudden memory of what must meet him at Haymore.

"Oh, no, my dear. I am not sure of the place for a month even. Orton has heart disease, and, though he may live for months or years, he may drop dead at any moment. He may be dead now. And in such a case, you see, the very same thing that happened to me at Medge would happen again at Haymore."

"How, papa?"

"If Orton should die, his successor would turn me adrift, to put in my place some friend of his own."

"Who has the appointing of the incumbent? The bishop of the diocese or some nobleman?"

"Neither. The living is attached to Haymore Manor, and is in the gift of the new squire."

In the gift of the new squire, and that squire Kightly Montgomery under a new name!

The thought of this complication turned Jennie pale. In her dismay and confusion, she could settle upon but one course—the course she had thought of all along—to tell her father everything; every single fact she knew concerning Kightly Montgomery.

The minister was now watching her curiously, anxiously.

To cover her distress, she asked the first question that came into her head, and not an irrelevant one:

"Were the terms favorable upon which you agreed to take this parish for a year, papa?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so. The living is worth six hundred pounds a year, and Orton gives me two hundred, with the use of the rectory."

"And you do all the work for one-third of the salary?"

"Yes, my dear; and I am very glad to do it. And there are hundreds of capable clergymen in England who would be glad to do it for one-sixth of the salary."

Then Mr. Campbell suddenly became conscious that he

was talking too freely of private matters in a crowded car. He looked about him. But every one seemed too sleepy to attend to him.

The woman with the three babies was sound asleep, as was her brood, and the group reminded the curate of a fat, cozy pussy cat and her kittens.

The woman with the bundles was nodding, catching herself, gripping her parcels and nodding again.

These were the nearest passengers to the curate and his daughter, and had evidently not been listening to the conversation.

The express had been running on a long while without stopping, but now, about noon, the steam horn shrieked again and the train drew into the station of a large manufacturing town, stopped two minutes and roared on again.

The swift motion of the train, that sent nearly all the grown people to nodding and all the children to sleep, seemed to have so overpowered the nerves of Jennie's young baby as to steep it into a deep stupor.

The little mother at length grew anxious.

"Don't you think baby sleeps too soundly, papa?" she inquired uneasily.

"Oh, no, my dear! She is all right. She will sleep until we get home and then wake up as bright as a daisy."

"Ten minutes for refreshments!" shouted the guard at the window, as he climbed along on the outside of the carriage, while the train drew into the station of another large town.

"Will you get out, Jennie?" inquired her father.

"No papa dear, I would much rather not," she answered.

"Then take the baby while I go," he said, carefully placing the little one on her lap within her arms.

"Now, what shall I bring you, dear?" he next inquired.

"A cup of tea and a biscuit, papa, nothing more," replied Jennie, who remembered the slender purse of the curate, who could ill afford the journey to Liverpool and back with his daughter.

She had ten pounds left of her own, but did not dare to offer them to her father, whose very poverty made him sensitive. She meant, however, when she should reach the parsonage, to put that little fund, through her mother's agency, into the general household expenses.

Mr. Campbell left the carriage and went across to the refreshment rooms.

Jennie's fellow passengers of the second class did not leave their seats, but took out luncheon baskets, and soon the air was full of the sound of popping ginger beer or ale or porter bottles, while bread and cheese and beef were laid out on laps covered with brown wrapping paper for a tablecloth.

The woman with the babies and the woman with the bundles, who sat opposite to Jennie and seemed to be friends, drew the cork of brown stout—one holding the bottle, and the other pulling the screw with all her might.

Then the mother filled a little thick glass tumbler with the foaming porter and held it to Jennie, saying kindly:

"Drink it, dearie. It'll do 'ee good; 'specially as ye're nussing a young babe."

Jennie, touched by the kindness, smiled her sweetest and thanked her neighbor, explaining that her heart was weak and that she could not bear strong porter.

"Then I hope your good man will bring 'ee some light wine," replied the woman.

"The gentleman with me is my father," said Jennie, glad to make this explanation.

"Your fey—— And the grandfeyther o' the bairn?" exclaimed the woman, opening her eyes with astonishment.

"Yes," said Jennie.

"Well, it's wonderful! He didn't look a day over twenty-five. Do he, now, M'riah?" she said, appealing to her companion of the bundles.

"He don't that," replied the latter.

But here the three babies became clamorous for something to eat, and the two women turned their attention to them. And though this party had been nibbling cake or candy, more or less, during the whole journey, as is too much the custom of their class, yet now they all ate as if they had fasted since breakfast.

Mr. Campbell reappeared with a little tray in his hand, on which was arranged a cup of tea, a small plate of cream toast, and another plate with the wing of a roast chicken, which he placed on the vacant seat, while he relieved Jennie of her sleeping babe.

"Oh, dear papa, to think that you should remember my

taste for milk toast and chicken, and bring them to me! This is killing the fatted calf, indeed," said Jennie gratefully as she took the tray upon her lap.

Mr. Campbell then sat down on the vacant seat with the baby in his arms; but he made no reply except by a smile.

The train started.

"Oh, dear," said Jennie, "we are carrying off the crockery ware!"

"Not at all," replied the father. "The return train will bring them back and leave them at this station. Such is the arrangement."

"Then my mind is easy. Did you get anything to eat, papa dear?"

"Oh, yes; a slice of cold beef and a cup of coffee while they were fixing up your tray."

"I am glad," said Jennie; and she gave her attention to her tray, and exhibited such a healthy appetite that not a crumb or a drop was left when she finished her meal and put the little service under the seat.

The train rushed on, nor stopped again until nearly sunset, when it ran in at the station of York.

Here the father and daughter got off to take a branch line to Chuxton, the nearest railway station to Haymore.

Willingly would the curate have stayed here overnight to show his daughter the great cathedral city, which she had never seen, had not two good reasons prevented—first, his poverty, which could not bear the expense; secondly, the anxiety of the wife and mother at home to see her long-absent daughter, which, he knew, could not tolerate the delay.

"Some day we will return to see this ancient city, my dear; but to-day we must hurry home to your mother," he said as he led her into the waiting-room to stay till their train should be ready to start.

There the "little angel" awoke in no angelic temper, but impatient to be nursed.

Jennie took her into the dressing-room, where she attended to all her needs, and presently brought her back smiling and good-natured to the arms of her grandfather.

"I foresee what an idol the grandmother will make of this little one," he said as he received her.

"The idea of calling my pretty young mamma a grand-

mother! It is well she is not a woman of fashion, or she would be disgusted," said Jennie, laughing.

"As it is, she will be delighted," said her father, looking curiously at his child. He was very pleasantly disappointed in Jennie. He had feared to meet in her a heartbroken woman—a forsaken wife, whom none of her "old blessings" of father and mother, home and family affection, could possibly console—and he found a daughter who had let go the unfaithful husband and comforted herself with her unoffending babe, and meant even to enjoy herself with her parents at the parsonage in the performance of every filial, maternal and domestic duty. And that this disposition was not forced, but was natural, might be seen and heard in her contented countenance and frequent laugh. Even now, if the thought would recur that the curate's temporary parish lay in the manor of Haymore, and the reigning or pretending squire was Rightly Montgomery, still, upon later reflection, she felt so much confidence in the wisdom and goodness of her father that she dismissed all dread of any fatal or even serious result of his meeting with her husband. And for one circumstance Jennie felt glad and grateful, namely, for the change of residence from Medge, where everybody had known her from childhood, and might, therefore, wonder and ask questions why the curate's married daughter should return home to live without her husband—since it was clear from her dress that she was not a widow.

No such wonder could be excited at Haymore; no such questions asked. The people were strangers. They had taken their temporary pastor upon well-merited trust, and his family history was unknown to them.

As for the other matter connected with Rightly Montgomery, she would tell her father everything, and he would know what to do.

Rightly Montgomery, she knew, never by any chance entered a church, so her father would never see him there.

As for the curate, when she should have told him who the new squire really was, it was unlikely that Mr. Campbell would feel disposed to make a clerical call at the manor house.

Under the divine Providence she would leave everything to her father.

While the father and daughter were still chatting pleasantly together a door was flung open and a voice was heard announcing:

"Train for Chuxton."

"Come, my child," said Mr. Campbell, rising with the baby on his arms and crossing the room, followed by Jennie.

They went out to the train and entered the second-class carriage.

In five minutes, after they were comfortably seated, the train was off, speeding away from the old cathedral city in a northerly direction across the moors.

The sun had not yet set, though it was on the edge of the horizon. Jennie fixed her eyes on the vastness of the brown moor that stretched, or rather rolled, away in all directions to meet the horizon. It reminded her of the sea. It seemed a boundless ocean, enchanted into stillness; for not a breath of air disturbed the motionless heather, and not a hamlet or a farmhouse broke the illusion. No doubt there were farms and villages not far off, but they were in the hollows, out of sight.

Presently Jennie turned from the window to look at her baby. The little one was fast asleep again; so was the curate, who had been traveling all night and all day, for twenty-four hours. He had his arms so securely wound around the sleeping child that Jennie forbore to take it away, lest she should disturb their rest.

The sun set; twilight faded; yet the train sped on over the moor.

Presently Jennie observed twinkling lights before her that seemed to be on the edge of the horizon. As the train sped on toward those lights she recognized them as belonging to a station.

Then the steam horn shrieked and waked up all the passengers, and the guide shouted:

"Chuxton!"

"Here we are, my dear," said the curate, waking up as the train stopped.

There were but few passengers who got out here, and there were all sorts of conveyances waiting for them, from donkey carts to fine coaches.

"How far are we from Haymore, papa?" inquired Jen-

nie as her father led her from the train to the waiting-room of the station.

"Ten miles, my dear."

"Is there a stagecoach to Haymore?"

"No, my dear, but I took the precaution to engage the fly from the Red Fox to meet us here for this train. If it has not come yet—and I do not see it—it will be here soon."

"How much expense I put you to, dear papa!"

"Tut, tut! there is a time to spend! Whether there is a time to save or not, while there is the least need anywhere of spending, I really do not know! There's the fly now!" exclaimed the curate, at the sound of wheels, suddenly breaking off in his discourse and going to the door.

"Well, Nahum, you are on time, I see!" said Mr. Campbell, speaking cheerfully to some one in the outer darkness.

"Ay, bound to be, sir, when your reverence had bespoken the kerridge," answered a buoyant voice from the shades.

"Come, my dear! But, Nahum, perhaps the mule wants food and water?"

"Not she, sir! She had her oats and her water and her mug of ale! You'd no believe, sir, how that lass loves ale! So, with your leave, I'll e'en give her another mug of that same, whiles she rests five minutes. No longer, your reverence. No longer, sir."

"Quite right. Let us know when you are ready."

The curate sat down by his daughter.

In something less than five minutes the voice of the hostler was heard, calling:

"All right now, sir. Miss Nancy and me is at your service, sir."

"Miss Nancy?" inquired Jennie as she arose and took her father's arm.

"This mule, of course. Nahum is an oddity! His avocations are multiform. He is coachman, groom, hostler and handy man generally at the Red Fox," Mr. Campbell explained as he took his daughter out to the carriage.

It was not a "fly" at all, though they called it so; it was a strong, snug carryall, covered all over with a black tarpaulin, except the front, which was open. It was drawn by a stout mule.

Mr. Campbell put his daughter and her child in the sheltered back seat and placed himself beside the coachman in

the front. And the carryall rolled away over the murky moor until it seemed to be swallowed up in the darkness.

But "Miss Nancy" knew the road, and, if she had not known it, her driver did. So they went on in safety.

CHAPTER IV

STARTLING NEWS

NAHUM opened conversation with Mr. Campbell.

"The last of the workmen have left to-day, sir," he said.

"The workmen? Oh, the decorators and upholsterers who were fitting up Haymore Hold for the young squire and his bride."

"Yes, sir. All is finished in the very latest style, and with all the modernest improvements. And they do say as there is not a place in the North Riding aiquil to it for magnificence and splendiferousness! They do that!"

"Ah, when are the young pair expected?"

"That I can't jest tell you, sir. But Mr. Isaiah Prowt, the bailiff, do say as he is to receive a week's notice of their arrival, so as to have the triumphanting arches put up all along the road leading into the village and the avenue from the park gate to the hall."

"That will make a fine display, Nahum, but an expensive one. However, I suppose it will give pleasure to the people."

"It will that, your reverence. And that is not all! They are to have tents and markees and pavilions all over the lawn, and a great outdoor gala for all the tenants, and even the villagers who are not tenants, and for the whole neighborhood; in fact, men, women, and children, sir, are to be feasted on the fat of the land, and have dances and games, and all that, all day long, and at night fireworks! All at the young squire's expense."

"It will be a boon to the village, where there is never even a market day or a fair."

"It will that, sir. Why, the people have gone stark, staring mad over the very thought of it, though they don't the least know when it is to come off. But they are looking

forrid to it. For, as you say, sir, they never have anything here. Chuxton is the market town, and the fairs go there on market day."

"So they never have a public fête unless it is given by the lord of the manor on the occasion of a marriage, or a coming of age in the family?"

"And never then, up to this toime. Such a day as this coming on has never been seen at Haymore in the memory of man. The old squires never did nothing like it."

"No? Why was that?"

"Oh, they kept themselves aloof. They never thought about their tenants, except to keep them pretty strict and punctuous in the payment of the rents. Otherwise they looked down on them as dirt underneath of their feet."

"Let us hope, from the present signs, that the new squire will be more genial and benevolent."

"He will that, sir. You may depend upon it. And no doubt he will have the old church repaired. And you'll do your part to welcome the bridal pair. You'll have the parish school children drilled to stand aich side the road by which they come and sing songs and throw flowers? And you'll have the bellringers to ring out joyful peals of music?"

"Oh, yes, certainly, with all my heart. It falls in the way of my office to see that the parish school children and the bellringers take their part and do their duties properly in the ceremonial reception of the bridal couple," cordially responded Mr. Campbell.

No more was said just then.

Jennie was aghast. She had not thought that Kightly Montgomery would bring his deceived bride, who was not a lawful wife, to England so soon after his *rencontre* with herself on shipboard. When he had left the steamer at Queens-town, to avoid meeting her father at Liverpool, she had supposed that he would go to the continent for his bridal tour, and return later to England. But instead of doing so he had written a letter from Queenstown, on the morning of his arrival there, to announce his intention of coming to Haymore. This letter he must have posted on the same morning, so that it came over land and sea by the shorter route of the Irish mail, and reached its destination at Haymore before she, by the longer way of the channel, arrived

at Liverpool. But why did he think of coming to Haymore at this time?

A little reflection told her why. She tried to put herself in Kightly Montgomery's place and think out his motives. Then she understood.

Kightly Montgomery knew certainly that Jennie had gone home to her father's, but he believed, erroneously, that she had gone to him in his old parish at Medge, in Hantz, where the curate had lived and preached for twenty years past, and where he was likely to continue to minister for forty years to come.

Nearly the whole length of England lay between Medge, on the south coast of Hantz, and Haymore, in the North Riding of Yorkshire. He might, therefore, go safely to his manor house without fear of being troubled by Jennie or her people. He could not dream, of course, that the Rev. James Campbell had left Medge to become the pastor of the parish of Haymore, where his daughter would be with him; else he would as soon have rushed into a burning furnace as to come to Yorkshire.

So far Jennie reasoned out correctly the meaning of Kightly Montgomery's course. But there was more cause for his false sense of security than she knew anything about.

Kightly Montgomery had not the least idea that Jennie, by putting odds and ends of facts and probabilities together, had made herself acquainted with his fraudulent claim to the name of Hay, and to the inheritance of Haymore. He thought she knew nothing beyond the fact of his second marriage, not even the name under which he married, and that, therefore, she could not know how or where to seek him, even if she were disposed to do so, which he utterly disbelieved. With his wronged wife at the extreme south of England, and in ignorance of his present name and residence, he felt perfectly safe in coming to Haymore in the north, to gratify his pride and vanity by a triumphant entry, with his queenly and beautiful bride, into the village and on to the manor house.

He little dreamed of the dread Nemesis awaiting him there.

"Jennie, my darling, why are you so silent?" inquired Mr. Campbell, breaking in upon his daughter's reverie.

"I have been listening, papa."

"But you have not heard anything for the last half hour. We have not been talking."

"I listened with a great deal of interest while you did talk, papa."

"And you have heard that in a few days, perhaps, we are going to have grand doings at Haymore to welcome the young squire and his bride."

"Yes, papa dear, I heard all that."

"What do you think of it?"

"I think it will be a very exciting time," evasively replied the young woman.

"Jennie, my dear, you speak so faintly. Are you tired?"

"Yes, papa dear—rather tired."

"Take courage, then, for we are near home, where the mother is waiting to welcome us with a bright fire and a nice tea table," said the curate.

"Yes, papa. Don't mind me, dear. It is a healthful weariness that will make me sleep all the better," replied Jennie.

But the last words were fairly jolted out of her mouth, for the carryall was now ascending a very steep hill.

The curate turned his head again to speak to his daughter.

"We are entering the village, dear, and the church and parsonage are at this end. You can see nothing from where you sit behind there. If you could you would see a stony road, with paving stones set sharp edge up to make a hold for horses' hoofs, otherwise they could scarcely climb it. And you would see high stone walls on each side of the road, with plantations behind them. These walls, my dear, inclose Haymore Park, through a portion of which this road runs. On the top of the hill is Haymore Old Church and Rectory. There is our home at present. There is an old graveyard around the church, and an old garden around the rectory. All this is at the entrance of the village, which stretches on both sides of the road over the hill and down the declivity. All around the manor, the church and the village roll the everlasting moors from the center to the circumference. There, my dear, you have a picture of our home, though you cannot see it."

"I see it in my mind's eye, papa."

All this time the mule was toiling slowly, painfully up the steep ascent.

Jennie, straining her eyes to look forward, saw nothing for a while but the black forms of her father and the driver against the darkness, but presently fitful lights glanced in sight and disappeared. After a while they grew more steady and stationary, and Jennie recognized

“The lights in the village,”

though they were still distant before her.

“Here we are,” said the curate blithely as the panting mule drew up before a gate in a wall, all covered with ivy or some other creeping plant, Jennie could not see what.

Beyond the gate and the wall was the front of a two-story, double stone house, like the wall, all covered with creeping vines, but with a bright firelight and lamplight gleaming redly from the windows of the lower room on the right-hand side.

The curate lifted his daughter and her child from the carryall and opened the gate that led between two low stone walls, also covered with green creepers, up to the steps of the long porch before the house. But some one in the house had heard the sound of wheels, for the front door was flung open, a small, slender woman rushed out and threw herself, sobbing, into the arms of Jennie.

“Oh, my darling! my darling! my darling!”

“Oh, mother! mother! mother!”

That was all they could say, as they clasped each other, sobbing.

Mr. Campbell went on before them into the house, carrying the baby out of the night air.

“Come in, come in, come in! Oh, welcome home, my child! my child!” sobbed the mother, as, with her arm around the waist of her daughter, she supported her into the house, through the hall and into that warm, bright room, where a sea coal fire was blazing in the grate, and a chandelier hung from the ceiling just over a dainty white cloth that covered the tea table, on which a pretty china service was arranged.

The parlor was furnished entirely in crimson—carpet, curtains, chair and sofa covers were all crimson, which, in

the lamplight and firelight, gave a very warm, bright glow to the room, which the travelers had seen from the carryall without.

Jennie was placed in an easy-chair, and her fur-lined cloak and beaver hat taken off her by gentle mother hands. Even in that sacred moment of meeting, the feminine instinct caused the curate's wife to hold up and admire the rich cloak and hat that had been given Jennie by her New York friends.

"You haven't looked at baby, mother dear," said Jennie.

"Oh! so I haven't! How could I forget!" exclaimed the young grandmother; and down went cloak and hat, disregarded, on the floor, while she turned to look for the little queen who was destined to ascend the throne of the household.

Mr. Campbell, smiling at this impetuosity, placed the infant in her arms.

And then—but I will spare my readers the rhapsodies that ensued.

Meanwhile, everything else was forgotten.

But Nahum, the driver, remembered he had to collect his fare, and so "made bold" to walk into the curate's house, and stand, hat in hand, at the parlor door. As he stood in the full glare of the light, he appeared a little, sturdy, muscular man, with a strange mixture of complexion; for while his skin was swarthy and his short hair, stubby beard and heavy eyebrows were as black as jet, his eyes were light blue. But the most characteristic feature in his remarkable face was his nose, which was large and turned up so that his nostrils described a semicircle upward. It was a "mocking nose," of the most distinct type. He wore a suit of coarse blue tweed, and carried a battered felt hat.

"Well, Nahum!" exclaimed the curate on catching sight of him.

"Please, your reverence, it is eight shillings, sir."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" said the curate.

And the price was paid and the driver dismissed.

Esther Campbell and her recovered daughter were now seated close together on the crimson sofa, which was drawn up on one side of the blazing fire. Esther had her grandchild on her lap and her right arm around Jennie's waist, while Jennie's head rested on her shoulder.

"Come, Hetty, my love, we want our tea," said the curate.

Mrs. Campbell put the baby in its mother's arms and rang the bell.

A Yorkshire woman of middle age, dressed in a blue cheviot cloth skirt and a gay striped sack of many colors, came in with the tea urn and put it on the table. She was a stranger to Jennie, but she courtesied to the "master's" daughter, who returned her greeting with a smile and bow.

"Where is our old servant, mamma?" inquired Jennie when the new one had left the room.

"Oh, Julia? She married the greengrocer and left us just before we left Medge."

"Why, Julia was forty years old at least!"

"Yes, dear, and the greengrocer was a widower of fifty with all his children grown up, married and settled."

"A good match for Julia, then!"

"Excellent."

The Yorkshire woman re-entered the room, bringing in a tray on which was arranged hot muffins, dried toast, broiled chicken and fried ham, all of which she placed on the table.

"This is our daughter, Mrs. Montgomery, whom we have been expecting to see for so long a time, Elspeth," said Mrs. Campbell, speaking from her own genial nature and overflowing happiness.

Elspeth courtesied again and smiled, but said nothing; she was rather shy. She took the baby, however, when the curate and his wife and daughter sat down to the table.

Esther Campbell looked a young, fair and pretty woman as she presided over the tea urn. She was really thirty-five years old, but did not look more than twenty-three. But, then, she had always had excellent health, few family cares and no sorrows, except in the marriage of her daughter, and even that was a light one compared to what that wayward daughter was made to suffer. She was a woman of medium height and slender form, for she had escaped the malady of fat to which women of middle age or those approaching middle age are subjected. Her figure was girlish, her features were delicate, her complexion very fair, with a faint rose hue over cheeks and chin. Her hair was brown, bright and curly. She wore her only Sunday's dress, a dark green silk with a little lace at the throat and wrists. It was put on in honor of her daughter's return.

The party of three waited on themselves and each other. When all were served Hetty Campbell would most eagerly have asked her daughter :

"Where is your husband?" but that she feared something was very wrong with him and dared not question Jennie on this subject in the presence of the new servant.

Jennie had a healthy young appetite, and ate heartily, to the great comfort of her mother, who joyously watched her plate and kept it well supplied.

"Do you like this place, mamma?" inquired Jennie at length.

"Yes, my dear, on many accounts I like it very much. Of course we felt a natural regret at leaving a home where we had lived so long that we seemed grown into it, like a cluster of oysters in their shells, which to shuck out is death. But as it was not our own act there was no compunction; and as it was inevitable, there had to be resignation. We are happy here, my dear."

"But the old friends—the people papa has christened and married and comforted and instructed for twenty years! For he was there before you were married, mamma."

"Yes, it was hard to leave them. But the knowledge that we must submit to the inevitable strengthened us even for that."

"And how do you like the people here, mamma?"

"Very much, indeed. They are exceedingly kind."

Elspeth having set the baby in its mother's lap, and left the room to take a new supply of hot muffins from the oven, Jennie lowered her voice and inquired :

"And the one humble woman among the people with whom we are in daily intercourse, and on whom so much of our comfort must depend, mamma?"

"You mean our new servant?"

"Of course. Is she a worthy successor to Julia?"

"A most worthy one. Elspeth—the widow Longman—has not always been in service. She has had reverses and great sorrows—the loss of her husband while she was still a young woman with an infant boy, a boy whom she spoiled as only a widowed mother can spoil an only child. He grew up, so it is said, not really wicked or worthless, but idle, wilful, headstrong, and fond of pleasure and of roving. One day the poor mother lost her temper, under some great

provocation, and told him he was the one grief and trial of her life, or words to that effect. He took his hat and walked out of the house. She thought he had only gone to the barn or to the village, and her burst of grief and anger being over, she prepared that evening an extra good supper for her boy, that they might make up their misunderstanding. But, though she waited long and anxiously, he did not come, nor has he ever come, nor has she ever heard one word of him since that day when he walked out of the house in sullen wrath."

"Oh, how dreadful! how dreadful!" exclaimed Jennie.

"Yes; it nearly killed her. The farm, with no one to look after it, went to rack and ruin. She was compelled to sell off all the stock to pay the rent, and then to give up the lease and go into service. That is Elspeth's sad little story," said Mrs. Campbell, hurriedly concluding as she saw the subject of her discourse re-entering the room with the plate of hot muffins in hand.

But no one wanted any more.

The curate gave thanks and they arose from the table.

The mother and daughter reseated themselves on the crimson sofa in the glow of the fire, Hetty Campbell took the baby on her lap, and the fondling and idolizing recommenced, and might have continued all night, but that James Campbell wisely put an end to the play.

"Come!" he said. "I have been traveling night and day for twenty-four hours, and am well worn out. So is Jennie, though she has only traveled one day by rail. So we had better go straight to bed. Listen, Hetty: I have had our daughter all day long to myself. You take her to your bosom to-night."

"Eh?" exclaimed his wife, not understanding.

"Do you sleep with Jennie and the precious baby to-night. That will make you all very happy, though I am not so sure about the baby. Only don't talk all night. Put off all mutual explanations until the morning," the curate explained.

Jennie sprang to her father and embraced him, exclaiming:

"Oh, papa! how good of you!"

Hetty, with the baby in her arms, came up on the other side, kissed him, and said:

"How kindly thoughtful of you, dear Jim!"

The curate laughed.

"There! there! I shall not break my heart for your absence this one night, Hetty, my dear. I shall sleep too soundly. And the arrangement is on no account to be a perpetual one."

Elspeth, having cleared away the tea table, was called in, and the evening worship was offered earlier than usual.

Mr. Campbell in the course of his devotions prayed for the safe return of the poor widow's son. This he had always done morning and evening since Elspeth had been living with the family.

It was a great comfort to the poor mother, who one day said to Mrs. Campbell:

"No minister ever prayed for my poor lad to come back before. Now the minister prays for him, I know he will come. I see it a' as plain as if my eyes were opened; the maister's prayer goes straight up to the Throne; the Lord receives it, and sends its spirit straight down to my boy's heart, wherever he may be on the footstool; and he will feel it a-drawing and a-drawing of him until he turns his steps homeward. I know it! And, oh! mem, the one that kept me from going crazy with the trouble was the thought that go where he would, he wouldn't get out of the Lord's world; and if I didn't know where he was, the Lord did; and if I couldn't see him, the Lord could. So I prayed for him, and by the Lord's help kept up."

When the prayers were over the little family circle separated.

Elspeth went back to her kitchen to wash up her dishes.

Hetty and Jennie kissed the husband and father good-night and went up to a spacious, white-draped chamber which was over the parlor, and where a fine sea coal fire was burning; and there they went to rest.

CHAPTER V

IN THE SILVER MOON MINING CAMP

It was the close of a dark November day. Heavy mists hung over the gulch and settled upon the mountain stream

that ran between high banks at its bottom, and upon the miners' huts that dotted either side.

The men had returned from their work and many of them were seeking rest and refreshment in the shed dignified with the name of saloon, where they paid very high prices for very bad whisky, and won or lost money with very grimy cards.

One excuse for them was this—the camp was a new one, far out of civilization. It had been called into existence by the hue and cry of a new and grand discovery of ore in a mine which the discoverers christened the Silver Moon. It was formed mostly of men who had been unsuccessful in other mines. And there was not a woman in it.

Three men sat on the ground in the rudest of rude stone huts, built up irregularly of small fragments of rocks, and roofed with slender logs. There was neither door, window nor chimney, but there was an opening in front, protected by a buffalo hide—to keep the heat in, and there was a hole in the roof to let the smoke out. The floor was the solid earth, and the fire was built against the wall. There was scarcely any furniture to be seen, only a heap of coarse blankets in one corner, and an iron pot and a few tin cups and plates in another.

Judy's well-ordered hut at Grizzly was a little palace compared to this squalid shelter.

The three men sitting on the earth floor, before the fire, which afforded the only light in the place, were unkempt, unwashed and altogether about the roughest-looking savages since the prehistoric ages. Yet they were three as different men as could be found anywhere.

The first was perhaps the very tallest man ever seen outside of a show, grandly proportioned, with a fine head, fine face, clear, blue eyes, and yellow hair that flowed to his shoulders, and a yellow beard that fell to his bosom. He was clothed in a buckskin coat trimmed with fur, now much the worse for wear, and buckskin leggings and buffalo-hide boots. In a word, this Hercules was our old friend, Samson Longman.

The second was a medium-sized and elderly man, with a thin, red face, red beard and a bald head. He was clothed in a coarse, gray shirt, duck trousers, a nondescript jacket, and many wrappings of sackcloth and sage grass around his

feet and ankles, by way of boots. He was our old acquaintance, Andrew Quin.

The third was a slight yet muscular youth, with clear, bright complexion, dark gray eyes and dark brown hair, a mocking nose and a laughing mouth. He wore a coarse, red flannel shirt, duck trousers, tucked into hide boots, a knit-woolen blouse, and battered felt hat. Of course, he was young Michael Man.

All three of the men lived together like friends in this hut. This evening they were all very grave, not to say gloomy.

Old Dandy Quin, sitting flat upon the ground and engaged in unwinding the strips of sacking from his tired feet, was the first to break a silence that had continued some time.

"I'm gettin' tired of this yere," he grumbled. "Here we've been more'n two months working like mules, and never got a gleam o' this yere moonlight. It's moon-calves we are, all on us. Ef it hadn't been for Longman and his gun we'd 'a' starved! that's what we would—'a' starved! We never had no luck nowhere! Leastways, I never had! I've been nigh twenty years slaving in the mines, digging in the bowels of the yeth, working hard and living harder, and running like a lunny after a jack-o'-lantern, from one grand discov'ry to another, but never got no more but hard work and harder living out of any on 'em, and now I'm sixty years old come next Martinmas, and I'm gettin' tired on it," he concluded, flinging his rags aside and caressing his poor feet.

"Dandy, ye poor ould craychur, haven't ye pit a cint itself, nowhere?" questioned Mike in a sympathetic tone.

"Oh, jest eleven hund'ed dollar in the savings bank at Sacramento, and that I hev saved up, dollar be dollar, in the last twenty years, a-working hard an' a-living hard, and a-starving and a-stinting of meself to do it! And since here we have come to this Silver Moon Mine it hev been all loss and no gain! And as I said before, we'd 'a' starved to death ef it hadn't been for Longman and his gun. And now he is going back on us!" concluded Dandy in an injured tone and with a look of reproach at the giant.

"I should be sorry to do that," said Longman, stroking his long, yellow beard. "But, Dandy, why won't you go

with me? I will gladly take you. You are alone here and growing old. Have you no natural longings to see your native country? Come! come along with me!"

"Why can't you stay here? How do you know but tomorrow the stroke of a pick may strike a vein of solid silver running down to the very middle of the earth?" demanded Dandy.

"Ah, that's it! Delusive hope has been the will-o'-the-wisp that has led you on from post to pillar for twenty years of unsuccess."

"Well, after working twenty years for almost nothing, you wouldn't have a man miss the chance of turning up a fortune with the very next stroke of his pick—a fortune that would pay him for all he has suffered—would you?"

"No, certainly not, if such luck were probable. But, Dandy, my friend, your pick has never struck a vein, and I think it never will. Be sensible. Draw your money from the savings bank, and come home to England with me. That sum will be a fortune to you in England, and set you up in any light business you may like; or buy you a small annuity sufficient for your comforts for the rest of your life. Think of it, Dandy," said Longman, with kindly interest in the lonely man.

"What makes you so hot-foot all of a sudden to go back to England?" demanded Dandy. "A great, strapping, very strapping young fellow like you to leave the grand field of enterprise to go back to England?"

Longman sighed and asked in his turn:

"What brought you here, Dandy?"

"Well, I s'pose it was the goold."

"Ay, man, the gold—the gold fever. I have nothing to say against it, because it has, on the whole, enriched and blessed the world; or, at least, I hope and believe so. But you, to come out here to the gold country at forty years of age, and to spend twenty years of life as hard as the life of a conviet, in the pursuit of an ignis-fatuus that always eluded you, still under the delusion that the next stroke of your pick may discover a vein, is to have lost so much of your life! Think of what I have said, Dandy, and redeem and enjoy the rest."

"I'll think of it, Maister Longman. But ye hev'n't answered my question. What brought yerself out? Not the

goold fever, I'll be bound. I hev never seed ye handle a pick or shool."

"No, not the gold fever. I was never fond of digging or delving, or any sort of hard work. That was my ruin, Dandy," said Longman with a deep sigh.

"Ruin!" exclaimed old Andrew, looking at the speaker from head to foot. "Well, then, ye are the foinest spacimin of a well-presarved ruin as ever I seed in my loife."

"My hatred of steady work made me an outcast from my home and an exile from my country, Dandy," gravely replied the hunter.

"A great, tall, strong fellow like you to be lazy!" exclaimed Dandy.

"No, not lazy; but averse to steady, hard, confining work," said Longman.

"An' for that same did the feyther of ye turn ye adrift, me poor Sam?" inquired Mike, striking into the talk.

"No, not my father—he was dead; but my mother did."

"Your mither! Hivenly mither av us all!" exclaimed Mike, stupidly staring at the hunter.

"I deserved it, Michael," said the hunter.

"Och, thin, tell us all and about it, Sam, dear," said Mike sympathetically.

And Longman briefly told his little story.

"You see, my father was a small farmer at Chuxton, in the North Riding of Yorkshire. I do not remember him, though I hope some day to make his acquaintance in the upper world. He left this one when I was a very young child—the first and only child," he began.

"The only son of his mother, and she a widow? Ye'll be looked after, Sam, be the Lord Himsilf, or ilse all the howly fathers have taiched me is not true," put in Mike.

"Our neighbors used to say that my mother spoiled me. I have often heard them say it to her before my face when I was a bairn."

"And, no doobt, they telled the truth," exclaimed Dandy.

"And what would the mither say to that?" inquired Mike.

"She would only draw me to her side and kiss me, to comfort me for the mortification of hearing such words. But you were right, Dandy. The neighbors did tell the

truth. My poor, widowed young mother did spoil her only child in her excessive fondness for him."

"Well, it was naterel," admitted Dandy.

"I grew up a very idle and headstrong boy, fonder of consorting with gamekeepers, and even with poachers, than of working on our farm. I think if I could have been taken on as an assistant by some gamekeeper, who would have given me plenty to do among guns and game, I might have been contented to stay at home; but I could get no such place. Besides, my work was badly wanted on the farm. We were not able to hire laborers. My mother, myself and one boy were expected to do everything; but I neglected my part," said Longman with a deep sigh.

No one made any reply.

"Mother bore with me very patiently for all the years I was growing; but by the time I was twenty years old, and as strong and tall for that age as if I had been twenty-five instead, and when the farm had been growing from bad to worse for years, my poor mother frequently lost her temper and scolded me—scolded me, a man, whom she had never scolded as a boy."

"And, faith, ye desarved it, hinny," said Dandy.

"Yes, I know I did. But one thing I can remember with satisfaction: bad as I was, I never gave my mother what she would have called 'the back answer.' I never in my life spoke an undutiful word to my mother."

"Good for ye, Sam!" exclaimed Mike.

"When her words were very sharp and bitter, and I could stand them no longer, I used to take my hat and walk out, and never come back till night. And she—poor mother!—she would have a nice, hot supper waiting for her prodigal son, with some extra luxury that she could ill afford added to the feast."

"An' she was a good craychur, be that same token," exclaimed Mike.

"Yes, she was good—very good—but I tired her beyond her patience. One day the crisis came; the rent was behind-hand; the bailiff was threatening; there seemed danger of an eviction. Then my mother, in her grief and anger, turned on me, said that if it had not been for my worthlessness the farm would have been prosperous. She had said

that so often before that the words had lost all significance to me. But she ended in saying this:

" 'If it hadn't been for you, Samson, I shouldn't ha' been brought to this disgrace and poverty. The cost of keeping you in idleness would have paid an able-bodied farm laborer, who would have kept the place in order. And now I tell you, if you can't work here, you had better go and find employment somewhere else to suit you.' "

"Faix, it was harrd on ye," said Mike.

"It was, though she did not mean it. She was half crazy with the trouble that I might have warded off from her. But, boys," added Longman solemnly, "her words fell on me stinging, burning, smarting, humiliating as a lash laid on a naked back. Without a word I took up my hat and walked out of the house, as I had often done before on other but less bitter occasions; only this time I did not return. That was five years ago. I have never seen my mother since."

A solemn silence fell on the trio.

Presently old Dandy inquired:

"An' where did ye go thin? Ye couldn't hev hed mooch money in yer pocket, if there was none to pay the rint."

"No, I had not a shilling. I walked into Chuxton, sold my silver watch for all it would bring, and then took a third-class ticket in the cheap parliamentary train to London, shipped as an able-bodied seaman on board the *Auro*, bound from St. Katherine's Docks to the Golden Gate."

"So it was for goold ye kem, after all," said Dandy.

"Not at all. I never went near the mines in search of gold. I drew my pay at 'Frisco, bought a couple of guns, a lot of ammunition, some boots, and struck into the wilderness, where there was plenty of game and no game laws."

"An' how hev ye thriven? Ye see, I niver knowed ye afore we met in the woods last summer," said Dandy.

"I have done well. I have been an industrious hunter. I have supplied forts, post agencies, miners' camps and military caravans with game. I have saved more money than you have, Dandy; and I am going home to old England—on a visit, mind you, not to stay—I wouldn't stay there on any terms, unless some one would make me head keeper on some estate where there is plenty of game. Even that would be a poor substitute for the grand, free life of

the hunter in these wilds. But, Mike, why do you look at me in that strange way?" Longman inquired of the Irish boy, who had been sitting with his elbows on his knees, and his head held between the palms of his hands, gazing silently and steadfastly into the face of the hunter.

"Yis, I'm lookin' at ye; I'm observin' ye, Misther Longman. That's so! That's a fact there's no denyin'," replied Mike, without removing his gaze, which was becoming embarrassing, if not offensive, to the good-natured hunter.

"But why? What's the matter?" demanded Longman, shifting his position so as to get out of the range of Mike's eyes' fire.

"What is the matther? Och! he ax what is the matther! Haven't ye just telled us how ye ran away fram yer poor withowed mither in her throuble, an' nivir wint back to ax how she windded through it? An' ye ax me what's the matther?" exclaimed Mike with much excitement.

"But, Mike, she turned me out of doors."

"No, she didn't, Misther Longman. Not aven on your own showin', which was like to be in your own favor. She upbreded you for idleness an' neglect av dooty. An' she was right! An' she told yer if ye couldn't worruk on the farm ye'd betther go and worruk somewheres else. An' she was right again, so she was."

"Well, she was right; and I took her at her word and left to work somewhere else."

"Yis; an' ye were the vagabond av the worruld for doin' that same, Misther Longman. Sure ye knew she nivir meant it, an' yez leaving must ha' broke her heart, and yez her onliest one in the worruld."

"What would you have had me to do, Mike?" inquired Longman very patiently.

"What wad I hev had ye to do, is it? Why, to hev gone to worruk on the farm and mindded yer ways from that hour, and hed the rint reddy on pay day. That's what I wud hev had ye to do, Misther Longman. I nivir hed a mither; me and me twin swishter, Judy, was orphint childer—born so—and nivir knowed a mither. But if I hed hed a mither, and she had got mad at me and put me out av the front door, I'd 'a' kem in at the back one. I wud nivir hev deserted me own mither—nivir! But I nivir hed a mither, and thim as has blessings nivir vally thim. I'm spaking me

mind, Misther Longman, and ye may dooble me oop and fling me over the bank and brek me neck at the bottom of the gulch if ye like, for ye're twice as big and strong as meself, but I'm bound to spake me mind!" exclaimed the Irish boy excitedly, digging his hands in his trousers pockets and straightening himself up.

"Give me your hand, Mike. You are a brave, true young fellow, and all that you say is right. Now, then, I must tell you that I have not neglected my mother. I wrote to her before I sailed from London, telling her where I was going. I also wrote to her from 'Frisco. I have written to her from every available point where I have taken up my abode. But I have never had an answer to any letter. She must have discarded me, and perhaps married again, for she was a comely woman, only thirty-eight years old, when I left her."

"Did it nivir occur till ye that the letthers might be lost in a wild, onsartin part uv the worruld like this?" inquired Mike.

"Yes, I have thought of that. And lately—I don't know why—the thought has grown upon me that my poor mother may be lonely and pining for her prodigal son. I cannot get rid of that thought. It haunts me day and night. That is why I have made up my mind to go home and make friends with my mother."

"As if she ivir was anything else but frinds wi' ye, Sam, darlint!" broke in Mike. He had stopped calling his comrade "Misther Longman."

"I didn't mean that exactly. I meant to make it all up with her, and to her, if I could. To give her all the money I have saved, to make her comfortable for life; and then come back to the free woods and the free game."

"Less ye could win to a keeper's place in the owld counthry," put in Mike.

"Yes; but that's a dream," laughed Longman.

"Aven so, it's a dhrame that may kem as thrue as me own swishter Judy's dhrame about her swatcharrt that brought her all through the Black Woods to find him at last."

"I don't in the least see how my dream—which was not even a dream, but a passing thought of a bare possibility—can come true," laughed Longman.

"Then I'll tell you!" exclaimed Mike. "Ye know Ran, whose life ye saved?"

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Longman in surprise at the vain question.

"Well, I only wanted to mind ye of him. Ye know he has kum into a great estate?"

"Of course, I have heard that, too."

"Very well, thin. He's going to live on it. And if ye be in England, and wanting av a keeper's place, what more natural than Misther Hay should pit you over his own kivvirs? You thet saved his life!"

"But, of course, the estate has a gamekeeper already."

"Tare an' 'ounds, man, and supposin' an' if it has! Misther Hay wud kape two keepers before he'd lave you out'n the cold!" indignantly exclaimed Mike.

"I know he would do all he possibly could for any of us. But it is time enough to think of all that when we get to England," said Longman.

"And are you bent on going, Mr. Longman?" inquired Andrew Quin.

"'Bent on' it, Dandy? I can't help it. Something is drawing me. I feel it all the time."

"On a visit?"

"On a visit for the present."

"Then I go with you, sir, and come back with you, if I feel like it—though it is giving up the chance of a grand future."

"But it is making reasonably sure of enjoying the rest of your days, Dandy."

"Well, mates, if you'll both be laving, it's meself that will go wid you. The ould fort will be right on our road, and I can shtop there to see me swishter Judy, and then I'll go back to Grizzly. Grizzly ain't no great shakes; but for a steady-going old mining camp, that will nivir promise to mek a man a millingnaire, nor yet starve him to death, but sorter keep him a-going on fair hopes and fair profits, why, thin, give me ould Grizzly!"

"Good for you, Mike, my bold boy! We shall be glad to have your company, even as far as the fort, if no further," said Longman, clapping his young comrade on the shoulder.

"Well, now, boys," said Andrew, "I hev hed twenty years' experience in these regions, where both of you are, relatively

speaking, newcomers. And I tell you, airy as it is in the season, there's snow not far off, and if so be we are bound to start, we had better be off to-morrow. What do you say?"

"I'm riddy," said Mike.

"And you, Mr. Longman?"

"I agree with you.

"Laugh those who can! Weep those who may!
Southward we march by break of day!"

CHAPTER VI

AT THE FORT

It was a glorious November morning, not yet cold in the latitude of the fort. Though there was a large wood fire in the sitting-room of the colonel's quarters, the front windows were open, admitting the fresh air as well as the bright sunshine.

The colonel's wife sat in her sewing-chair beside her work-stand at some little distance from the open window and nearer the fire, engaged in making a frock for one of her younger girls.

Judy sat at the window with a book in her hand, dividing her attention between the open page and the open view.

There was no one else in the room. The colonel and his eldest son, "Jim," were at the adjutant's office. All the younger children were in the schoolroom under the charge of their eldest sister, "Betty," who was their teacher.

Judy had been three months separated from her brother, and from her betrothed, and under the exclusive care of Mrs. Moseley. Quick, witty, imitative and anxious to improve, Judy had made rapid advances. She had recovered all the half-forgotten book knowledge taught her at the convent school, and had progressed considerably beyond that. Hearing only good English spoken about her, she had gradually dropped her sweet dialect, which both Col. Moseley and Mr. Jim declared to be a lost charm, and only occasionally, under emotion or excitement, she would suddenly fall into it again. She was also better dressed than for-

merly; though again the colonel and his son declared not so picturesquely.

Mrs. Moseley had judiciously expended a portion of the money left by Mike for the benefit of his sister, and her short, red skirt and black jacket had given place to a brown dress with white cuffs and collars, exchanged on Sundays for a fine, dark blue one with embroidered frills.

The mail came twice a week to the fort, and every mail brought Judy two or more letters from Ran; for he wrote nearly every day. The desire to answer all Ran's letters was a great spur to improvement in Judy, who, showing all her compositions to Mrs. Moseley, begging her to correct the spelling, grammar and punctuation, and then carefully studying these corrections before making the clean copy that finally went to her betrothed, made greater progress in her education than she could have accomplished under any other circumstances.

Ran kept her advised of everything that happened to him, and his latest communications assured her that his cause was going on swimmingly, though, of course, there were, necessarily, "law's delays."

To corroborate this, Mrs. Moseley received occasional letters from her old schoolmate, Mrs. Samuel Walling, who gave her chapter after chapter of what she called this romance in real life; how much the hero of it was admired by all to whom she had introduced him; how from his dark beauty and grace he was dubbed the Oriental Prince; how he was taken up by every one in society except the Van-sitarts, who, in the interests of their late governess and favorite, and with idiotic obstinacy, disallowed a claim that every one else was forced to admit; last of all, how young Randolph Hay had discovered a lovely cousin, and sole surviving relative, in Palma Hay Stuart, the only child of his late Uncle James Jordan Hay, and the wife of Cleve Stuart, a man of fortune from Mississippi.

Much of this information—all of it, in fact, except that which concerned his "lionizing"—Ran had faithfully imparted to Judy. And she rejoiced in his present prosperity and future prospects.

Judy had but one source of anxiety—her Brother Mike! Three letters she had received from him since he took leave of her in September; but these had reached her at intervals

of a week or ten days apart, and since the last of these three, two months had passed and she had heard nothing.

There were times when she grew very much distressed, and felt almost sure that the party of adventurers to which Mike belonged had been massacred.

On this splendid November morning Judy, sitting at the window, with her grammar in hand, was more than usually downcast.

First, there was the news that had come to her from her betrothed, that he was to sail for England about the first of December with Mr. Will Walling, to go through certain forms, preliminary to taking possession of the Hay estate and ousting the present usurper; his absence must be indefinite; but he would return as soon as possible—he hoped in two months' time at the furthest. That news depressed the girl very much; but that was not all. The mail that brought Ran's letter brought none from Mike. It was at least her twentieth disappointment, but she felt it as bitterly as if it had been her first.

"What is the matter, Judy?" at length inquired the colonel's wife, noticing the dejected countenance of her protégée.

"Oh, ma'am, it's about Mike! I am sure the Indians must have—— Oh, ma'am, I can't spake it!" the girl answered, breaking off with a sob.

"My poor child, there is really no cause for such keen anxiety. Your brother and his party have gone far beyond the mail route in their search for silver. He cannot send a letter to you from his present camp, except by the chance of some one returning toward the mail routes. Be patient and hopeful, Judy."

"I do try, ma'am; but it is awful to lose one's brother in such a—void!"

"There is no void in which any creature can be lost, Judy; for the Creator is everywhere, and He is our Father as well, and none of His children can stray out of His presence. It must be dreadful to have any beloved one disappear mysteriously, but it is certain that the Lord knows where he or she is, and will take care of His child, living or dead!"

"I believe that, ma'am," said Judy, trying to rally her spirits.

She returned to the study of her book; but her thoughts were too distracted for concentration, and her eyes wandered from the page to the open window. The great gates of the fort were directly in front of the colonel's quarters and about a hundred yards distant.

Presently Judy, looking out toward them, dropped her book, started up and exclaimed:

"Why! What!"

And then she stopped and gazed through the window.

"What is it, my child?" inquired the lady.

"A strange officer, ma'am, and several strange soldiers coming in at the gate."

Mrs. Moseley laid down her work and came and joined Judy at the window.

A small troop of horsemen, about ten men in all, with an officer at their head, marched through the gate, wheeled to the right, and rode up to the adjutant's quarters, where they all dismounted.

The officer, attended by an orderly, went into the office.

The men remained outside, standing by their horses.

"What does it mean, ma'am, do you think?" inquired Judy.

"I don't know. It may be some small reinforcement on their way to some other fort. We shall hear when the colonel comes in."

As the lady spoke the orderly came out of the adjutant's office and spoke to the dismounted men, who immediately dispersed, leading their horses away.

The two women stood a few minutes longer at the window, and then, as there was nothing more to be learned by looking out, each returned to her employment.

Even after that, Judy continued to glance from her lesson in syntax, through the open window that commanded the great gates and a broad sweep of the fort grounds; but nothing occurred to reward her vigilance or satisfy her curiosity.

At length she grew tired of watching, and gave her undivided attention to her lesson.

Two hours passed, and the colonel might have been seen coming from the adjutant's office to his own quarters, with a brisk step and a radiant face, with full twenty years taken off his fifty.

"Good news, Dolly, my dear!" he said, bursting into the sitting-room. "Good news! Dispatches from Washington. Call all the children together to hear the good news."

"Go, Judy, dear, and bring them," exclaimed Mrs. Moseley in eager anticipation.

Judy flew to do her bidding, and soon the room was filled with the progeny of the military patriarch.

"Where's Jim?" demanded the colonel, looking around.

"Here I am, father," said the eldest son, entering the room at that moment.

"And Betty?"

"Here, father, behind you. So close to you that you can't see me!"

"And Baby Lu?"

"Right there between your feet, father. If you look down you will see her."

"Hadn't you better call the roll, dad? Then you will be sure that we are all here!" cried Master Clin.

"Hold your tongue, you young scamp, and listen!" exclaimed the colonel, laughing. Then turning to his wife gravely, almost tearfully, he said:

"Dolly, my dear, it has come at last! It has been a long time coming. I have got my promotion and six months' leave!"

Mrs. Moseley jumped from her chair.

"Oh, Moses! Moses! I am so glad! So thankful! I never expected it in our lifetime—never! I looked that we should live and die among the frontier forts, with no change but from one to another. Oh, thank Heaven! Thank Heaven!"

"Maj. Lawson will succeed me in command here. Capt. King, who brought the dispatches, remains here with the ten new recruits who are to take the places of as many of our soldiers whose terms of service are drawing to a close. There, children, there is my good news. Now be off with you and rollic over it!" he added, turning to the young people.

"Oh! father dear, are we really going East? Really going to the cities and to civilization?" breathlessly demanded Betty, thinking this news much too good, too wonderful to be true.

And the faces of all the other children eagerly seconded their elder sister's question.

"Really and truly, my dear ones. And my pleasure in going is immeasurably heightened by the joy the anticipation of the change gives you all. Now run away; I wish to speak to your mother," he said, smiling on them.

"Tell us one thing, dad, do!" said Master Clinton.

"Well, what is it, my boy?"

"When are we going?"

"In a very few days. I cannot tell you yet what day. Now run away."

The boy scampered off, and his army of brothers and sisters followed him.

Judy also would have left the room, but Mrs. Moseley stopped her.

"Stay, my dear girl. We only sent the children away that they might give vent to their joy in the open air, as you hear them doing. Now, Moses!" said the lady.

"Well, my dear, it is only this: King will dine with us to-day, and I have invited Lawson, and Hill, and Perry to meet him. Is it too late to make some suitable addition to our family spread?" anxiously inquired the colonel.

"Oh! no, not if we put back the dinner an hour. There is a fine haunch of venison, a buffalo tongue, and a bunch of prairie fowl that I have just bought from an Indian. And then I will open my preserve jars in honor of the occasion, though I did not intend to touch them until Christmas."

"You are a tower of strength, Dolly, my dear, but we shall not be here at Christmas. Now I have something to do over at the office. I will be back with King a little while before dinner," concluded the colonel as he left the room.

"What is the matter, Judy? You look very grave, my dear," said Mrs. Moseley, who was at last at leisure to observe her protégée.

"Oh, ma'am!" said the girl in a broken voice, being almost in tears; "oh, dear, ma'am, it is not that I am not glad and thankful for the good fortune that has come to you and the dear colonel and the childer——"

"Children, Judy."

"Yes, ma'am, children, to be sure, only sometimes I do forget."

"Well, you were saying——"

"Yes, ma'am, I was saying I am glad and thankful to the Lord and all the saints for the blessing and the prosperity that have come to you; but, but, but——"

"But what, Judy?"

The girl did not answer, but burst into tears and sobbed aloud.

"Judy! Judy! Judy! What is all this? Are you crying because you are doubtful of what is to become of you?" tenderly inquired the lady, laying her hand on the girl's curly, dark hair.

"It's the parting with yeez a', ma'am! And the thought what will I do at all, at all, when ye lave this! Oh, sure it is a silfish wretch that I am to be graiving for meself, instid of rejoicing with yeez!" wept the girl, backsliding hopelessly into her dialect.

"Judy, dear, do you think we would leave you behind? No, dear, not one of us would think of such a cruel thing. We must take you with us, Judy, my poor child!"

"Oh, ma'am, sure and it's a hivinly angel av goodness ye are and always was, and meself always said it. And I'd go with you, willing, and glad, and grateful, only there's me poor Mike. If Mike should write to me, or come to see me, what wud he do not to find me?"

"My girl, we would leave word with the adjutant to forward any letters that might come for you, and if your brother should appear in person, to tell him where you were to be found. There! will that do? And remember we are going to New York, and you will see Ran before he sails for England. Come, now! will that do?" archly inquired the colonel's wife.

"Oh, yis, ma'am! Yis, sure!" exclaimed Judy, her eyes sparkling through her tears. "And sure meself will be the thankful craychur!"

"Creature, Judy."

"So it is! Creature, ma'am, thank you, and I will learn after a while."

Mrs. Moseley then left the sitting-room and went to the kitchen to give directions to the soldier's wife who filled the place of her cook.

Judy laid aside her book and began to put the room in order for the visitors.

Punctually at about fifteen minutes before the dinner hour the colonel came in with Capt. King, a fine, tall, stalwart-looking man with dark complexion, black hair and mustache, and about thirty-five years of age. He introduced the strangers to Mrs. Moseley, who received him cordially, and to "Miss Man," who only bowed.

They were soon joined by the major, the adjutant and the surgeon, and then all went in to dinner. Judy scarcely opened her lips in speech during the meal, for fear of falling into her dialect. The impromptu dinner party passed off very successfully, and the evening passed gayly.

The next day being Tuesday, preparations for leaving the fort were commenced by the colonel and his family.

They fixed the ensuing Monday for their departure.

Mrs. Moseley, in the midst of her packing, found time to write to her friend, Augusta Walling, announcing their return to the East, and asking her to find a large furnished house suitable to their large family and moderate income, somewhere in an inexpensive suburb of New York, and to have it ready for them to enter on their arrival, to save the cost of going to a hotel with their numerous party.

Every one was happy except Judy, who was grieving to go away without having heard from her missing brother, even though she was going where she would be sure to meet her betrothed.

With distressful anxiety she watched for the one remaining mail that would come in before they would leave the fort.

Thursday, the next mail day, came and brought her letters from Ran, telling her of the progress of his business and the passing of his time, and that he had at length secured apartments in the same building with his cousins, and had left his hotel to establish himself there until he should sail for England.

Judy was satisfied so far as her lover was concerned; but she was so bitterly disappointed and distressed at not getting any news of her brother by this last mail that she felt as if her last hope for him had died out, almost as if she might mourn him as dead, and she went away to her own tiny room to have her cry out by herself.

Then she wrote a long letter addressed to her brother, in which she explained to him the necessity of leaving the fort with the colonel's family, and begging him to write to her or come and see her.

This she placed in the adjutant's hands, begging him to give it to Mike if he should come to the fort.

By Friday night all the preparations for departure were completed. It had been a heavy week's work to get ready a family of fifteen for a removal and a long journey, but the task was finished at last, and the colonel said:

"We may now take two Sabbaths' rest, the Jewish and the Christian, before setting out on our pilgrimage."

And that night the whole family went to bed tired enough to enjoy the two days' rest to come.

The next day—Saturday—was a beautiful day, clear, and bright, and mild. Fine fires were burning in all the fireplaces, but all the windows were open.

Mrs. Moseley was distributing to the few soldiers' wives that were in the camp many household articles that she would not want. Also she was receiving informal visits from officers' wives, who were sorry to have her leave the fort.

Judy, having nothing on earth to do, was walking up and down on the piazza of the colonel's quarters, thinking of her brother, Mike, and his too probable fate.

On this day, people were coming in and going out of the fort gates continually; but Judy took no notice of them.

Presently there came through the gates another troop—not a troop of horse as on the preceding Monday, but a very small troop on foot, consisting of some half a dozen of the most ragged, dirty, forlorn and Heaven-forsaken looking tramps that Christian eyes ever beheld.

Judy, pacing up and down the piazza, never saw them. She was muttering to herself:

"I know he is dead, but I shall never know how he died, or where he died, or how much he might have suffered before he died. And this will be a sorrow to me worse than death itself! A life-long sorrow that even me darlint Ran can nivr comfort me for."

"Judy!"

A familiar voice called in her ear, a hard hand clapped her on the shoulder.

She sprang as if she had been shot, gazed for an instant as if she had gone mad, and then, with a great cry, flung herself in her brother's arms.

Mike was worn out with his wearisome tramp, so he sat down on one of the wooden benches, drew his sister on his knees, and held her to his bosom, where she lay sobbing in a great paroxysm of emotion.

Her cry had brought Mrs. Moseley and several other members of the family to the door. They saw Mike sitting there with his sister's face hidden on his bosom. Mike lifted his old rag of a hat to the lady, who smiled and returned into the house with all who had followed her to the door. She would not disturb such a joyful meeting. She was as much delighted as surprised that it had come so opportunely.

It was some time before Judy was composed enough to speak. And even then her first utterances were incoherent ejaculations of thankfulness, delight and affection. At length she said, falling into her old dialect:

"It's an answer to prayer! It's a blissing come down from the Mither av Hivin. Oh, sure me harrt was breaking in me brest to lave this, an' yoursilf away, and me unbeknownst of whativir hed become av ye!"

"Wheriver were ye going, Judy?" he asked.

"Oh, sure ye didn't know! How should ye?" she said. And then she told him the situation, and inquired, in her turn, how it was that he came so happily to see her, before her departure.

"That Silver Moon Mine was jist the most misfortunate ventur' as ivir was made! Iviry one of the bhoys as went from Grizzly have come back, hed to, ilse we wud ha' perished in the snow there, this winter. What a differint climit this is! Why, it's almost like simmir here compared to there. So we's all going back to slow and sure old Grizzly. All, lasteways, ixcept Longman and Dandy, who are going back to the ould counthry."

"Oh, Mike, are you going back to Grizzly?"

"Yis, sure! Where ilse wud I go?"

"Oh, Mike, don't let us be parted! Go with me to New York! Ran is going to England about the first of December; wouldn't you like to see him once more before he goes?"

Mike hesitated, then he said slowly:

"Sure, and I wud like to go with ye, Judy, and I wud like to see Ran, but——"

"Oh, don't say but, Mike. Draw out the bit of money ye left in the savings bank at 'Frisco, and come with us."

"Yis, but what the divil will I do before I get to 'Frisco without a cint av money or a dacint suit av clothes?"

"Oh—I'll—I'll—I'll spake to the colonel's leddy!" said Judy, springing up impulsively and running into the house to lay the case before her benefactress.

Mrs. Moseley was all sympathy and kindness, and soon devised a plan by which Mike should have an outfit and transportation to San Francisco, where he might draw his savings from the bank, and repay all advances.

That day and the next, through the kindness of the colonel and his officers, the footsore, starved and wearied tramps were fed and rested at the fort.

On Monday the determined miners went on their way to Grizzly, well provided with food and drink for their journey through the woods.

At the same time a train of ambulances and army wagons, containing the colonel and his numerous family, the discharged soldiers, with Longman, Mike, Dandy and much goods, filed out of the fort gates and took the road to St. Agnetta, where they were all to take the train to San Francisco, en route for New York.

CHAPTER VII

A GLAD SURPRISE

"I HAVE found them, ma'am! I have found them! And they are charming—charming!" exclaimed Ran Hay with boyish exultation, bursting into Mrs. Samuel Walling's parlor with the freedom of an inmate on the morning succeeding his meeting with Cleve and Palma Stuart.

"Sit down, you excitable fellow, and tell me whom you have found. Is it Sir John Franklin and his crew, or is it Mr. Livingstone?" inquired the lady, rising and giving her hand to the visitor.

"Neither, ma'am; though I would give my life to find either if it were possible. But I have found my own dear cousins!" replied Ran, dropping into a chair.

"Your Uncle James Jordan's children? Those whom you advertised for?"

"His daughter, ma'am; his sole surviving child, Palma, and her husband, Cleve Stuart, who is the only son and sole heir of the late John Stuart, a rich planter of Mississippi. They are a charming young couple, only a few months married."

"Cleve Stuart?" said Mrs. Walling, musing.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Why, I know him! He used to be a devoted admirer of Lamia Leegh. We all thought that it would certainly be a match. But I fancy she discarded him in favor of the wealthier suitor, your treacherous traveling companion, Gentleman Geff, the rival claimant of Haymore."

"If she did she made a miserable mistake. But I do not think she did. I don't believe she ever had the chance. I cannot fancy Stuart ever having been enslaved by any woman before his lovely wife, to whom he is perfectly devoted!" replied Ran.

"Ah! well, I may have been mistaken. He was very much in society. So was Miss Leegh. They were frequently together. But tell me how you found them."

"Through that advertisement, of course."

"Oh, yes, I know. But how?"

"Well, Stuart answered my advertisement by coming in person to my hotel; finding me out, he left a note with his address, asking me to call there. I got that note when I came in, and immediately started out to see my cousins. I found them in an elegant little flat, their rooms almost as charming as themselves. I spent the afternoon with them, dined with them, went to the theater with them, supped with them, and only left them in the 'wee sma' hours' of the morning. And I could not sleep for happiness in the thought of having found my kindred, and such delightful kindred! Then as soon as possible this morning I came to tell you the good news."

"I am very glad to hear it, Mr. Hay! I have lost sight of Mr. Stuart for the last six months."

"That is just as long as they have been married. They

were married on the first of May last, and spent the whole season at some place up the Hudson, and have only been in town for a few weeks. And I do not think she knows a soul here!" said Ran with a pleading look in his soft, dark eyes that said as plainly as words could have spoken:

"Won't you please to take the dear little one under your wing?"

Mrs. Walling replied just as if he had spoken his plea.

"Yes, certainly, I will call on Mrs. Stuart with great pleasure if you will give me her address."

"When? Oh, when?" demanded Ran with more eagerness than politeness. And then suddenly remembering himself he said: "Oh, I beg pardon."

"Why, any time—this week, to-morrow, to-day, if you like. Yes, to-day, it will be just as convenient as any other day. Will you escort me, Mr. Hay?" said the lady.

"Oh, with the greatest pleasure and gratitude, ma'am. You are very kind."

Mrs. Walling touched a bell, which brought a servant to the room. She ordered her carriage to be brought to the door, and then turning to young Hay, said:

"If you will remain here until I put on my bonnet and wraps I will not keep you long."

Ran rose and bowed, and Mrs. Walling left the room.

Twenty minutes later Ran handed the lady into her carriage, entered after her, and gave the order:

"To the Alto Flats."

The truth is that Mrs. Samuel Walling was impelled by curiosity as well as by neighborly kindness in thus promptly going to call on Mrs. Cleve Stuart.

A half hour's drive brought them to the flats.

Leaving Mrs. Walling in the carriage, but taking her card, he entered the office of the house and gave it, with his own, to the janitor's boy, who took them upstairs.

In five minutes the boy came down and reported that Mrs. Cleve Stuart was at home, and would the gentleman and lady come up?

Ran returned to the carriage, assisted Mrs. Walling to alight, and conducted her into the house; they entered the elevator and were soon "landed" at the door of the private hall leading into the Stuarts' suite of apartments.

The boy opened the parlor door and they entered.

Palma, neatly dressed in her well-worn, best suit of crimson cashmere, with its narrow, white frills at throat and wrists, and her curly, black hair lightly shading her forehead, arose from her chair and came forward with shy grace to receive her visitors.

"This is Mrs. Samuel Walling, dear Cousin Palma. She does me the honor to be my good friend. Mrs. Walling, my cousin, Mrs. Cleve Stuart," said Ran, going through the introduction as well as he could.

Palma put out her hand shyly, half in doubt whether she should do so or not, and murmured:

"I am very happy to see you, madam."

But Mrs. Walling took her hand with a frank and cordial smile and said:

"I am delighted to know you! I should have recognized you without an introduction, anywhere, from your likeness to your cousin here! Why, you might be twins."

In a few minutes the three friends were seated and talking as freely as if they had known each other all their lives.

Evidently the two women were mutually pleased with each other.

While they conversed Cleve Stuart came in from his daily, fruitless quest after employment.

He looked surprised and pleased to see Mrs. Walling with his wife, and warmly shook hands with her, expressing his satisfaction at meeting her again after so long an interval of time.

"It was your own fault, Mr. Stuart. You should have sent an old friend your wedding cards," said the lady, laughing.

"We had none, madam. My little girl was an invalid, and our wedding was a very quiet one at Lull's, where I had taken her for a change of air," replied Stuart.

"I will not excuse you, sir. On your return to the city with your sweet, young wife, you should have sent me your address, that I might have called sooner. I hold that you have deprived me of some weeks' enjoyment I should otherwise have had in the acquaintance of Mrs. Cleve Stuart."

"Then I have no more to say, dear madam, but to throw myself upon your mercy," replied Stuart as he seated himself near the group.

"Never mind, my dear," said Mrs. Walling, turning to

Palma, "we must make up for lost time by becoming at once very intimate friends. Now, will you come and take tea with me to-morrow at six o'clock? Not a fashionable tea, dear child, at which hundreds of people sip Oolong or Gunpowder out of dolls' china cups, but a real unfashionable tea party of ten or a dozen intimate friends, who assemble at 'early candle-light,' and sit comfortably down to a long table—a custom of my grandmother's that I loved in my childhood, and brought with me from old Maryland to this city, and indulge in whenever I can with some of my friends. Will you come, you and Mr. Stuart, dear?"

"With much pleasure, thank you, ma'am," replied Palma, speaking for both.

"I want you to meet my friend, Mrs. Duncan, and one or two other good people."

"Thank you very much, madam," said Palma shyly.

"She will be glad to make friends among your friends, Mrs. Walling, for she is almost a stranger here," added Stuart.

"Very well, then, to-morrow afternoon, at six o'clock," concluded the lady, and she arose to take her leave.

Ran shook hands with his cousins and escorted Mrs. Walling back to her carriage, and would have bid her good-by at the door, but that the lady said:

"Come in here, Mr. Hay. I want to have more talk with you."

Ran obeyed.

When they were seated and were well on their way along the avenue Mrs. Walling said:

"I have heard from our friends at the fort but once since your arrival, Mr. Hay! The letter of introduction you brought is the last, except a card, I have had from Mrs. Moseley, and never has so long an interval passed without hearing from her."

"And you answered her last letter, dear madam?"

"Of course I did, immediately, and have written one or two since. Have you heard from them, Mr. Hay?"

"Not for two weeks! And I should be very anxious if I did not know that they must have written. The mails in that unsettled region are very irregular, often delayed and sometimes lost. That condition of affairs out there explains an apparent silence that might otherwise make me

seriously anxious. We shall get letters by and by, Mrs. Walling, for every mail is not lost."

"Well, I hope they got my letters."

"They must have received every one, though we have got none," replied Ran.

When the carriage drew up before the Walling house and Ran had helped the lady to alight and escorted her to her own door, he would have taken leave, but she insisted that he should enter with her and remain for dinner.

There he spent the evening, after dinner taking a hand in a rubber of whist with Mrs. Walling and the two Messrs. Walling.

That same night Mr. Samuel Walling left by the late train for Washington to see the British minister. He expected to be back in three days.

The next morning Mrs. Walling sent out her few invitations to intimate friends for her entertainment. It was only under certain conditions that the lady could indulge in the practical reminiscence of her childhood, represented by this old-fashioned tea party, which, when it occurred, always superseded the late dinner; and the first of these conditions was the absence of her husband, who could never give up a dinner for a tea, no matter how abundantly the table for the latter might be spread.

Mr. Walling's journey to Washington furnished her opportunity on this occasion. So, early in the morning, she sent out about half a dozen little cocked-hat notes of invitation to some of her old friends not among the most fashionable of her acquaintances. And all who were disengaged accepted at once. Among these was good little Mrs. Duncan, and old Mrs. Murphy, and Miss Christiansen—all pleasant people.

At six o'clock her guests began to arrive—only eight in number, including the hostess. Six of these were ladies, the only gentlemen present being Mr. Cleve Stuart, Mr. Randolph Hay and Mr. Roger Duncan.

The elegant and luxurious "tea" was as abundant and varied as any dinner need be, and much more dainty than any dinner can be. It was not a full-dress party, nor a ceremonious occasion; so both before and after tea there was some card playing and much gossip.

Mr. Stuart and Mr. Duncan, with Miss Christiansen and

Mrs. Murphy, sat down to a rubber of whist. Mrs. Walling, Mrs. Duncan, Mrs. Stuart and Mr. Hay sat near each other in a group and gossiped with all their might and main.

Mrs. Duncan was the principal talker; and after telling many a spicy but harmless bit of news, she took up the story of her protégée, Jennie Montgomery, and soon interested all her hearers in it. The facts were new to them all except to herself and Mrs. Murphy.

"What puzzled me about the young thing was this: That while she had lost every particle of respect and affection for her would-be murderer, she persisted in shielding him from justice. Now, I can understand a woman shielding a criminal whom she has loved, and still loves; but I cannot understand her protecting an assassin who has aimed at her life, and whom she fears and abhors!"

Then Palma's eyes began to sparkle. She had her little story to tell, too. And she wanted to tell it.

"Do you know," she said, as soon as she could slip into the busy conversation—"do you know that my husband was arrested by mistake for Capt. Kightly Montgomery, and held for a murderous assault, until he could prove his identity by competent witnesses?"

The ladies, startled by this information, made little, low exclamations of surprise.

"Your husband was one of the witnesses, Mrs. Walling," continued Palma, pleased with herself that she could contribute some little item of interest to the conversation.

"Oh, yes! I think I remember hearing something about some one being arrested by mistake, charged with something or other, and Mr. Walling being called as a witness to prove the accused to be some other than the man wanted; but, really, now, there are so many sensational items in the daily papers that one shoves the other from the memory. So it was Mr. Cleve Stuart, was it? Pleasant for him," said Mrs. Walling.

"And it was really your husband, Mrs. Stuart, who was taken to the woman's ward of the hospital to be identified by Jennie Montgomery! I heard all about it at the time, but I had forgotten the name of the gentleman who had been arrested by mistake," said Mrs. Duncan, taking a good look at Stuart, who was in a fine light for the view, seated at the card table immediately under a chandelier. "And

there certainly is a very striking likeness between him and the miniature of the young woman's murderous husband," she concluded.

And then all the other ladies turned and gazed at Stuart, who was blissfully unconscious of the severe scrutiny.

"But though there is a striking likeness, there is also a very great difference," resumed Mrs. Duncan. "But you can see for yourselves. By the merest chance I have that miniature in my pocket."

"Oh, do let us see it, dear Mrs. Duncan, do!" pleaded Palma, eager to behold the likeness that had led to her husband's false arrest.

"Yes, my dear; but first let me tell you how I happen to have it in my possession, and also to have it with me here. Mrs. Montgomery spent the last ten days of her stay in the city in my house. The miniature which had been found in her possession when the police searched her room, and had been used in the vain effort to trace her assailant, was at length restored to her. And to show how entirely she had ceased to care for the man who tried to murder her, she actually forgot his picture, and left it behind in her bureau drawer. I never chanced to find it until this morning; and as I was coming out, I thought I would do it up and send it out to her by mail. So I put it in a small box, directed and sealed it and put it in my pocket with the intention of posting it, and then—forgot all about it until now. Now you shall see it."

She drew a small pasteboard box from her pocket, broke the seals, opened it and took out a small morocco case, which she also opened and handed to Palma.

"There is a slight resemblance. Only a very slight one. I do not see how any one could mistake this sinister-looking face for a miniature of Mr. Stuart. Now, do you, Mrs. Walling?" said Palma with an aggrieved air as she passed the picture to her friend and hostess.

"There is a very wonderful likeness to my eyes, my dear, in features, hair, complexion and all—except expression."

"And expression is everything. I see scarcely any likeness myself," persisted Palma.

"Will you allow me to look at it?" Ran inquired.

Mrs. Walling placed it in his hand.

"Now, do you see any likeness between that ill face and Cleve's?" inquired Palma, appealing to her cousin.

"Not the least!" exclaimed Ran on the first cursory glance at the miniature. Then holding it closer and gazing more attentively he exclaimed suddenly:

"Why, I know this fellow! It is Gentleman Geff, as he appeared when he first came to Grizzly, before he shaved his mustache off and let his beard grow! It's Gentleman Geff!"

"Gentleman Geff!" echoed all the ladies, except Mrs. Walling, who took the picture and gazed at it in silence for a moment, and then, returning it, said:

"Yes! I see now! So it is! Though the full beard made so great a difference that even the likeness did not occur to me. Excuse me one moment, friends. I will return directly." And she hastily left the room.

Ran could scarcely get over his astonishment at his discovery. Gentleman Geff, the very fine dude who had seemed too dainty for any of the rudenesses of life, yet who had treacherously shot him in the woods, robbed him of his documents, and possessed himself of his estates, was also the man who had attempted the murder of his own wife and feloniously married another woman!

"But who is Gentleman Geff?" inquired Palma, Mrs. Duncan and Miss Christiansen, in a breath.

"Please wait a little, ladies, until the return of Mrs. Walling. Perhaps she will inform you, or allow me to tell you, who he is," said Ran respectfully, and even deprecatingly.

Mrs. Walling returned with what might be called Mr. Walling's professional photograph album in her hand.

She opened it at a certain page and pointed out a face and said:

"Look at that and compare it with the miniature, and then tell me if the two are not likenesses of the same person, notwithstanding the difference made by the mustache on one face and the full beard on the other."

She had handed the two pictures first to Palma, who gazed for a moment, and then nodded assent, and passed them around to her companions.

"But who is the man?" inquired Mrs. Duncan, while Palma and Miss Christiansen seconded the question by their eager looks.

"Friends, he was one of Messrs. Wallings' clients, but is so no longer. He has managed to deceive two astute lawyers, to impose upon society, to get hold of a name and an estate that does not belong to him, and to marry the most beautiful woman in the country and take her off to Europe in triumph, while his own deserted wife and child, whom he believed he had safely disposed of by murder, sailed with him in the same ship, unsuspected by him, unsuspecting, also, it seems, of her faithless, murderous husband's presence there. He is an adventurer of many aliases, a gambler, a forger, a swindler, a perjurer, a bigamist and an assassin."

Mrs. Walling paused a moment to look upon her shocked audience, and then continued:

"That is the man. What his name is I cannot tell you. We knew him as Mr. Randolph Hay, of Haymore. You have all heard of him under that name, and the *éclat* of the splendid festivities at the Vansitart mansion on the occasion of his marriage with Miss Leegh has scarcely died away. Jennie Montgomery knew him as Capt. Kightly Montgomery; my young friend, Mr. Hay, knew him as Geoffrey Delamere, Esq.; and gamblers of Grizzly Gulch as Gentleman Geff."

She paused again to mark the effect of her words.

But no one spoke; the women were shocked into silence and pallor. At length, however, Ran murmured:

"This is too horrible!"

"You know that the man whom society has been lionizing for the last six months is a fraudulent claimant of the Haymore estate; you should also know that this gentleman here, whom I introduced to you as simply Mr. Hay, is really the true Randolph Hay, of Haymore, and a few weeks at furthest will see him invested with his manor."

Mrs. Duncan and Miss Christiansen both turned to congratulate Ran, who laughed and blushed like a girl at the honor due him.

"Four by honors and six by tricks, and we have beat the rubber!" exclaimed Mr. Roger Duncan, rising in triumph from the whist table and breaking in upon the gravity of the circle collected around the fire.

No one of that circle thought of speaking to the others of their discovery through the miniature and photograph.

And soon the company broke up.

CHAPTER VIII

UNEXPECTED ARRIVALS

FROM this day forth the life of Cleve and Palma changed. They made friends and went much into company through the introductions of Mrs. Walling. They were young and innocently fond of gayety, and they were led on by Ran, who was liberally supplied with money advanced by his solicitors, and who, from being a daily visitor at their apartments, had at last taken up his abode under the same roof for the sake of being nearer to them until he should sail for England, accompanied by Mr. William Walling.

Unfortunately, neither Randolph Hay nor the Wallings suspected the impoverished condition of their new friends, else they would not have tempted or led the young pair into a way of life so much above their means.

As it was, their scanty little fund had to be drawn upon for such additions to Palma's toilet, and even to Cleve's, in the way of nice boots and fresh gloves, that seemed really indispensable to them when they went out in the evening. Had Palma even suspected their own poverty she would not have gone anywhere if it cost money to go there. But, unsuspecting as she was, believing, as she did, that her husband was in very easy circumstances, she went out a great deal; and Cleve, seeing how much she enjoyed society, had not the heart to check her enjoyment by telling her the truth.

Only gloves and boots and car fare her pleasures cost them. She had two dresses, the crimson cashmere, much worn, but carefully preserved, and often cleaned and repaired for continual use by the careful hands of Mrs. Pole. This was her dress for dinners and afternoon teas. Her white India muslin—her confirmation robe, and afterward her wedding suit—was now her only evening dress. Neither of these were at all stylish, but they were neat and clean; and then her boots and gloves were perfectly fitting, fresh and faultless.

Every day Cleve went forth to seek employment, and

every night returned disappointed to find himself poorer by the day's expenditures than he had been the day before.

Everything was going out and nothing coming in; and yet he shrank from saying to Palma:

"We cannot afford another pair of new gloves even, dear," or to do anything but smile in her face when she would only ask him to go with her to a lunch party at Mrs. Duncan's, or to a five-o'clock tea at Miss Christiansen's.

If Ran had only known their straits as he bounded daily up and down the stairs, too full of life and energy to avail himself of the elevator, how gladly, how joyously, would he have poured into his cousin's lap wealth from his own abundant means, nor ever dreamed of offering offense in proffering what he himself, in their reversed circumstances, would have been frankly willing to receive from them.

But he knew nothing, suspected nothing, of their poverty; and even if he had known, and had offered to give assistance, Cleve Stuart, in his spirit of pride or independence, would have refused it.

Ran held firmly to his purpose of giving his cousin a fair share of their grandfather's estate, as soon as he himself should be put in lawful possession, which was only a question of a few weeks' time; but he said nothing more about it to either Palma or Cleve. He thought they understood his intentions, and believed in them, and that it would be in bad taste to refer to them again. Besides, he did not suspect how dark the future looked to one of them at least, and what a source of anxiety it was.

What the young pair really thought of their cousin's offer to share, was just this—that it had been made, not from a delicate sense of justice that would stand the test of time and opportunity, but from a sudden impulse of generosity that might yield to cool afterthought. Neither of them placed much reliance on the offer, especially as they had repudiated it at the time, and Ran had never renewed it.

The day for young Hay's departure for England was at length fixed. He was to sail on the second of December. It had been first suggested that Mr. Samuel Walling should attend him to England, and introduce him personally to the London solicitors of the Hays of Haymore; but, as usual, Mr. Will put in his plea of overwork, brain exhaustion, want of change, and so on, and, as usual, his claim was

allowed, and it was decided that he should accompany the young heir.

The aged priest, Father Pedro de Leon, having under oath testified to the identity of Randolph Hay, had bidden an affectionate good-by to his pupil and returned to his flock in San Francisco.

It was remarkable that while Mr. Sam Walling, the head of the firm of Walling & Walling, took all the heaviest responsibilities, did all the hardest work, seldom left his desk during the office hours, and never left the city except on business, Mr. Will, the junior partner, required all the relaxation in frequent visits to Newport and Saratoga during the summer months, and Washington and even Savannah during the winter season. And now it seemed absolutely necessary that Mr. Will should have a sea voyage to restore the shaken equilibrium of his overtaken mind and body.

"That's just it!" Mrs. Walling said one day to Ran when speaking of the trip to England. "Our firm, as a firm, is always full of work, yet manages to have a good deal of play also; only Sam takes the work and Will the play."

As the month of November drew to a close and the day of his departure came near, Ran grew more and more uneasy. He had not heard a word from Judy for more than three weeks, though in that time he had written so many letters; nor had Mrs. Walling lately heard from Mrs. Moseley.

Ran was not of a temperament to borrow trouble. Quite the contrary; he always looked on the bright side. He was willing to make every allowance for the well-known uncertainty of the mails in those unsettled regions guarded by the frontier forts; but still it seemed strange and alarming that for a month past no mail had come safely through contingent dangers.

His greatest anxiety now was that he should have to sail for Europe without having heard from Judy.

He confided his trouble to Cleve and Palma, with whom he now spent every evening whenever they were at home.

One evening, about a week before he was to sail, he was sitting with Cleve and Palma in their tiny parlor.

Cleve had been reading aloud, but laid down his book on the entrance of Ran. Palma was knitting a woollen wristlet, the last of four pair that she had been making for Cleve and

Mrs. Pole, and she continued to knit after greeting her cousin.

Ran brought a chair to the little table at which the other two sat, threw himself into it, sighed and said:

"This is Saturday night, the twenty-fifth, and in one week from to-day, on Saturday, the second of December, I must sail for England."

"Yes, Cousin Randolph, I know. And I am very sorry it should be necessary that you should have to go—very. But you will soon return," sympathetically replied Palma.

"It is about Judy," frankly exclaimed Ran. "I have not had a letter from her for nearly a month."

"But you yourself have told us of the uncertainty of the mails."

"Yes, and that might have been an explanation, and therefore a kind of comfort, for failing to get a single letter in time. But when three or four that I should have got have failed to come, it is strange and alarming."

Neither Cleve nor Palma found anything to answer to this. They knew and felt that it was both "strange and alarming."

"Let us hope that you will get a letter within a few days," at length ventured Stuart.

"Why, you may get one even to-morrow," hopefully exclaimed Palma.

"Oh, yes! And I may have to sail for England in the most agonizing anxiety as to Judy's fate!" said Ran with a profound sigh.

"But there is no reason for such an intense anxiety. She is in excellent hands," said Palma.

"Oh! but when I came away there was a talk of the intended rising of the Indians! Good Heaven! the fort may have been stormed and all hands massacred for all I know!" exclaimed the youth, growing pallid at the very thought.

"Randolph!" cried Palma in horror.

"Nothing of that sort could have happened without our having heard of it before this. The authorities at Washington would have received the news, and it would have been in all the papers. Some survivor would have escaped to the nearest telegraph station and sent the message flying to Washington," said Cleve.

"Oh, yes—certainly. But I never thought of that! It is

a real relief to me! I hope I may get a letter before I go! If I do not, and could have my own way, I would sacrifice the passage and wait here until I could hear from Judy. But Mr. Walling says it is absolutely necessary that I should go no later certainly than the day set for sailing."

"But if a letter should come we will immediately send it after you," said Palma.

"Thank you, cousin, dear; I know that you will do all that you can. Well, I have learned one lesson from all this," said Ran so solemnly that both his companions looked up inquiringly, and Palma asked:

"What is it, Cousin Randolph?"

"It is this: If Heaven ever should bring my dear Judy and myself together again I will never part with her—no, never while we both shall live! Nothing shall ever part us again except the will of Heaven!"

"But how about school and college that was to have prepared you both for the sphere of life to which you are called?" Palma inquired with some little amusement.

"Oh, bother that! It was all the nonsense about 'the sphere of life to which we are called' that parted Judy and me! And it shall never part us again! We will go to school and college, but we need not part and live in school and college. We will marry and go to housekeeping in some city where there are educational advantages. I will attend the college courses. Judy shall have teachers at home. And so we will live until we are polished up bright enough to show ourselves to my grandfather's neighbors and tenants at Haymore. Then we will settle there for good, and no one will ever know that the successors of Squire Hay were first of all a pair of little ragamuffins and ignoramuses from a California mining camp! Yes, that is what I will do, and no prudence, and no policy, and no consideration for 'that sphere of life to which we are called,' nor for anything else but Judy herself, shall influence me! When we meet again we shall be married out of hand and nothing but death shall part us! When we meet again! But when will that be? Ah, me!" sighed poor Ran.

There came a rap at the door, and the "boy" put in his head and said:

"The lady and ge'men would come up, sir, which they

said there wasn't no call to send up no card," then withdrew his head and ran away.

The three cousins looked up to see a tall, martial-looking man with a gray mustache, and clothed in a military overcoat and fatigue cap, enter the room with a slender, graceful girl, in a long gray cloth ulster and a little gray plush hat, hanging on his arm.

The three companions stared for a moment, and then Ran sprang up, overturning his chair in his haste, and rushed toward them, exclaiming:

"Col. Moseley! Judy! Oh, Judy!"

And in another instant Judy was pressed to his heart.

"Now, introduce us to your friends, Mr. Hay," said the colonel, taking off his cap and bowing to the lady and gentleman, who had risen to their feet to receive the unknown and unexpected guests.

"Oh, pardon me," exclaimed Ran, raising Judy, drawing her arm through his own and taking her up to his cousins.

"Mr. and Mrs. Stuart, this is Miss Judith Man, my betrothed. Judy, darling, these are my Cousin Palma and her husband," he said.

It was to be thought that the young girl would have made her quaint, parish-school courtesy; but she did not. She bowed, blushed and smiled very prettily. Cleve Stuart shook hands with her and said that he was very glad to see her. But Palma drew the girl to her bosom and kissed her, with a few murmured words of welcome.

Then Ran presented:

"Col. Moseley, Mrs. Stuart, Mr. Stuart."

And all shook hands in the old-time, cordial manner.

And when all were seated, Col. Moseley in Ran's vacated chair at the little table with Cleve and Palma, and Ran and Judy, side by side, on the little sofa near them, there came the natural question from Stuart:

"When did you reach New York, colonel?"

"At noon to-day," replied Moseley.

"At noon to-day, and I see nothing of Judy until eight o'clock this evening!" exclaimed Ran.

"Patience, my dear fellow; I had to find you before I could bring her. I arrived, with a large party, at noon, as I said; took them all to an old-fashioned hotel downtown, where the prices are not quite ruinous; left them all there,

and went to hunt up you at your hotel, found that you had left it, but could not find out where you had gone; went back to own place and dined with my family; after dinner went out to hunt up the Wallings, with the view of finding you, and also of finding the furnished house I had commissioned Walling to engage for me; looked in at the office first, but found no one there but the janitor cleaning up; office hours were over; Mr. Samuel Walling gone home to his dinner; got his address; went to the house; found Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Walling, who were as much amazed at seeing me as if I had been a ghost risen from the dead. In fact, they had not got my letter of advice, and, consequently, had not engaged any furnished house for my tribe. However, they insisted on making it all right for us. They told me where to find you, Hay; and then when I said I must go back to the hotel to pick up Judy, Mrs. Walling insisted on going with me to see her old schoolmate and dear friend, and she went with me. Well, in brief, when she met my wife, nothing would do but she must take her and all the girls home to her own house to stay until we can find a home for ourselves. I and the boys remain at the hotel. Judy is to join Mrs. Moseley and the girls at the Wallings'."

"Indeed, then, Judy is to do nothing of the sort. Judy is to stay here with me. I am her natural protector under the circumstances," said little Palma, drawing herself up with an assumption of matronly dignity that was very amusing to the colonel.

"Very well, my dear lady. It shall be as you please, or as Miss Judith pleases; only, I do not know how I shall face Mesdames Walling and Moseley without taking her to them."

"I will write a note and relieve you of responsibility in the matter," exclaimed Palma, rising and going toward a little writing-desk.

"But you have not consulted Miss Judith," said the colonel.

"Oh, I know she will stay with us," exclaimed Palma, going toward the girl and putting her arms around her neck and murmuring:

"You will stay with us, will you not, dear Judy? I may call you Judy, may I not? I have known you as Judy, and

loved you as Judy, before I ever saw you. Shall I call you Judy?"

"Sure and ye may, ma'am!" exclaimed the girl with cordial impetuosity; but then, catching herself up suddenly, she blushed and added sottly: "If you please, ma'am, I should like you to call me so."

Palma smiled, kissed her forehead, and then went to her tiny desk and wrote the note to Mrs. Moseley.

The colonel had but little time to stay, and soon arose to say good-night.

"By the way," he said, "I had almost forgotten. I am the bearer of an invitation for you all to come and dine with us at Mrs. Walling's to-morrow, at seven."

Palma looked at her husband, understood his eyes, and answered for both:

"Love to Mrs. Walling, and we will go with much pleasure."

Col. Moseley shook hands all around, like the plain, old-fashioned soldier that he was, and then went away.

There remained Ran and Judy, sitting on the sofa, and Cleve and Palma at the table.

The lovers were comparing notes, giving in their experience of the time while they were separated, speaking in subdued tones that presently sank so low as to be quite inaudible to any other ears than their own; so it might be surmised that Ran was imparting to Judy his new scheme of life for the future.

The married pair at the table with the truest politeness ignored the presence of the just reunited lovers, and took up their occupations that had been interrupted by the visitors. Cleve opened his book and resumed his reading, but now in a lower tone, quite audible to Palma, but not disturbing to Ran or Judy. He was reading *Marmion*, the scene of the meeting between the pilgrim and the abbess on the balcony. But Palma, knitting mechanically, could not listen. She was seized with a terrible anxiety that filled her mind and crowded out everything else. She had, from the impulse of a warm heart, invited Judy to stay, and Judy was staying.

But where on the face of the earth was she to put Judy? They had in their doll's house of a flat but four tiny rooms—parlor, kitchen and two bedrooms. What was to be done?

How could she listen to the story the abbess was telling the pilgrim, and the minutes passing so rapidly, and bedtime coming on, and no bed to put her invited guest in? And there was Cleve utterly unconscious of her dilemma, although he knew as well as she did the extent—or rather limits—of their accommodation.

Cleve finished the canto and closed the book in complacent ignorance that Palma had not heard a word of it.

The clock on the mantel struck eleven. It was a cheap clock and it struck loudly.

Ran arose to bid good-night.

"I really ought to beg your pardon for keeping you up. But you will excuse me for this once," he said.

"Why, certainly! Certainly! Don't go yet. We shall not retire for hours. Oh, pray! pray! don't go yet!" pleaded Palma with her curly hair fairly stiffening itself on end; for, when Ran had left, what, in the name of Heaven, was she to do with Judy? Take the girl in with herself and Cleve? Or lay her over Mrs. Pole on that narrow slab of a cot that could not hold two side by side?

Palma had got into a terrible dilemma which she feared, by the creepy coldness of her scalp, was going to turn her hair white!

She would have been very much relieved if—after the old-fashioned New England style—the betrothed lovers should sit up all night.

"Oh, do, do, do stay longer!" she still pleaded, looking beseechingly at Ran.

But Ran was looking at his sweetheart, and replied gravely:

"You are very kind! Too kind! And I thank you so much! But, even for Judy's sake, I ought to go. She is very tired from her long journey. Good-night."

And he turned to go, Judy following him to the door of the parlor, where, of course, they lingered over their adieus.

Then Stuart got a chance to speak apart with Palma. He looked into her dismayed face and broke into a little, low laugh.

"Oh! what in the name of goodness shall I do?" she exclaimed, clasping her hands and gazing appealingly up into his face.

Then he pitied her evident distress and answered:

"Why, dear, you will have to share your own bed with Miss Judy and give me a rug on the sofa."

Her face brightened.

"Oh, Cleve!" she exclaimed, "you are an angel of light in a cutaway coat! You have saved my life—or reason!"

Then suddenly growing grave she added:

"But the little sofa is so short, and you are so long!"

"Now don't look so distressed, dear. The inconvenience is nothing at all. And it is only for one night. To-morrow I will see the janitor and try to get a room for our little friend contiguous to our own, so that she may remain with us."

Stuart spoke of incurring this additional expense with apparent cheerfulness, although his small funds were nearly exhausted, and his efforts to procure employment were quite fruitless.

But he said no more then, for Ran, who had lingered at the door over his last words with Judy, now kissed her good-night and went away, and the girl rejoined her friends in the little parlor.

CHAPTER IX

PALMA'S NEW FRIEND

"I WILL leave you for half an hour to make your arrangements," said Stuart to his wife; and he left the room and went downstairs and out upon the sidewalk to take the air.

Judy had thrown herself into an easy-chair and stretched out her feet to the bright little fire.

Palma pushed the small sofa back against the wall, and then went into the bedroom, from which she brought a cushion and a rug. When she had arranged the sofa into a couch she turned and looked at her guest.

Judy was nodding.

Palma went and laid her hand on the sleeper's shoulder and gently aroused her, saying:

"Whenever you wish to retire, dear, your room is ready."

"Oh! sure, I thank ye, ma'am. Any time as shutes your-

self will shute me," replied Judy with a wide gape, waking up.

"Come, then," said Palma, and she led the sleepy and half-bewildered girl into the pretty little bedchamber, where she had laid out a dainty night dress for her guest. Judy waked up fully in the process of disrobing, and then her hostess said:

"To-morrow you shall have a better accommodation, but to-night you will share my room. I hope you won't mind it."

"Och, no, ma'am. Sure and haven't I been used to pigging in itself?" began Judy brightly, but she suddenly checked herself and amended her phraseology—"I mean, ma'am, I have been accustomed to close quarters in the mining camp, and this is a palace compared to any place I have ever seen before."

"It is a pretty little doll's house as one could wish, for dolls," replied Palma with a laugh. "Not quite spacious enough, however, for one who loves space."

"Which side am I to sleep on, ma'am?" inquired the girl when she was ready for bed.

"Any side you wish, dear. But, Judy, please don't call me 'ma'am.' If you do I shall be obliged to call you 'miss,' and I should not like that, and I do not think you would like it, either."

"Fegs and I wouldn't! Oh! that is to say, no, ma'am, I should not. I should feel it to be cold and unkind of you."

"Very well, then, Judy dear, do as you would be done by."

"I will, ma'am," said the girl, getting into bed and lying down on the side next to the wall and squeezing herself against it to take up as little room as possible, "and indeed, ma'am, since it displeases you, I will try to remember—never—to call—you ma'am—again."

The last word was scarcely audible, for as soon as Judy's head dropped on the pillow her eyes closed and she fell fast asleep.

Palma returned to the parlor, drew the easy-chair to the fire, and seated herself to wait for Stuart.

He came in at length and dropped himself into the larger easy-chair by Palma's side.

"Judy is fast asleep. She dropped asleep first in this

chair here, and afterward, when I got her to bed, she fell asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow," Palma told him with a smile.

"And you?" inquired Stuart.

"Oh! I am not at all sleepy. I feel too much elated by the arrival of all these people. I wonder what Mrs. Pole will think when she finds out that we have a visitor staying with us?"

"Doesn't she know, Palma?"

"Why, no, Cleve. She went to bed before the colonel left us, and how could she know that the girl remained behind? And I wonder what she will say?"

"Well, Palma, I think she will disapprove."

"But you don't, Cleve?"

"Not at all, dear. I am glad you took the girl in. We will find a room for her to-morrow."

The clock struck twelve, yet still the young couple sat talking to each other like a pair of lovers loath to say good-night, as any young "courting couple" could possibly be; for, in fact, they were now sweethearts. Palma, we know, had always loved Cleve; but only since their marriage had Cleve been growing every day more in love with his wife. So they sat and talked, or sat in silence over the fire, until the clock struck two.

"Now, my dear, you must really go to bed, even if you are not sleepy," said Stuart, rising and standing up, as much as to say, "Here I shall stand until you go."

"You turn me out, then?"

"Yes, I turn you out!"

Palma stood on tiptoes to kiss him good-night. He lifted her in his arms and kissed her again and again, and then set her down, and she vanished through the damask portières into the little bedroom.

Stuart threw off his coat and lay down on the sofa. It was a short sofa with a low back and two arms. Cleve's head lay upon one arm and his legs dangled over the other. The discomfort of the position would have kept him from sleep even if the apartment had been quiet, which it was not.

Palma's entrance had waked Judy. The girl had had three hours' sound sleep and had waked up refreshed in mind and body, delighted to find herself in such a rare,

beautiful little room and with such a lovely companion. She felt no inclination to sleep more just then—but to talk.

A kindly yet indiscreet question from Palma set her tongue going, and she talked on and never stopped until she had told her whole story.

As there was nothing but the red damask portières that separated the little chamber from the little parlor, Stuart heard the whole of that story; he could not help hearing it. Once or twice he hemmed to let the narrator know that he was awake and listening; but that made no difference to Judy. She had no secrets. "All the birds of the air" were welcome to hear her history. It was near daylight when at length she had talked herself to sleep. As for Palma, she had dozed through the narrative, though Judy had not suspected it.

With the first glinting of the rising sun's rays through the slats of the parlor blinds, Stuart gladly arose from his uncomfortable couch and went into the little bathroom to make his morning toilet.

When he had finished it, in returning to the parlor he passed by the open door and saw that Mrs. Pole had risen, tidied up her kitchen and got breakfast well under way. He stepped in to tell her about their guest and send her into the parlor to set the room to rights. Then he went downstairs to take the air on the sidewalk.

Mrs. Pole passed into the parlor to hoist the window, replenish the fire, and restore the place to order before setting the breakfast table.

Her movements awoke the two sleepers in the next room.

They arose laughing and talking, dressed themselves quickly and came out into the parlor.

Mrs. Pole turned from the window she was just closing to look at the stranger.

Palma laughingly introduced the two.

"This is our friend, Miss Judith Man, Poley. And, Judy, darling, this is our dear Mrs. Pole, who is like a second mother to me."

The elder woman wiped her clean hands on her clean apron, and then gave the stranger a close clasp and a warm welcome.

"Now, Poley, dear, you can go and look after the breakfast, and we will set the table. Miss Judith is quite at home

with us, and knows as much about housekeeping as we do," said Palma brightly.

Mrs. Pole made no objection, but left the room.

Then Palma—and Judy following her example—began to take the books off the center table and pile them in a corner. Then they folded the table cover and laid it upon them.

Palma went to the prettiest little doll's corner cupboard that ever was seen, opened a drawer in the lower part of it, and took out a white damask cloth which she spread upon the table.

Then she handed out the china, piece by piece, which Judy took and arranged on the cloth.

"You see, dear, what a little casket we live in," said Palma when the table was ready and the cupboard closed.

"Sure, darlint, ye are a precious jewel yerself, and where would ye be stored but in a casket itself?" demanded Judy.

Presently Stuart came up from below and greeted the two young women cordially.

Mrs. Pole brought in the breakfast and they sat down to the table.

They were scarcely seated when Ran entered, shook hands all around, and took the fourth place at the table, which had been prepared for him.

The conversation grew lively.

"When shall we see Mike?" inquired Ran at length.

"Oh! to-day, I hope," replied Judy.

"Does he know where to find us?"

"He didn't yesterday! No more did we! And he wint with his friends—friends to a chape—cheap boarding-house before the colonel found you out. But sure he will know where we are by this time! The colonel will have told him."

While they were yet speaking in walked the colonel with Mike.

All the company arose from the table to receive them.

Ran and Mike closed hands cordially at once, while the colonel was shaking hands with Stuart, Palma, and Judy.

Then Ran introduced Mike to his cousins, who received him heartily.

"And, now, won't you both sit down and take some breakfast with us?" inquired Stuart and Palma in a breath.

"Oh, thank you! I just got up from my breakfast to bring Man here," said the colonel.

"And meself finished before I wint to his honor," said Mike.

"But do not let us disturb you. Pray, go on with your own breakfast," said Col. Moseley.

"Oh, we have done!" replied Stuart, while Palma rang the bell for Mrs. Pole to come and take away the service.

A few minutes later they were all seated in the little parlor, which the company of six nearly filled.

"And how is the misthress this morning, sir?" inquired Judy of the colonel.

"Oh! she has quite recovered from her fatigue and has gone house-hunting with Mrs. Walling."

"And the childher?"

"Ah! well and delighted with the great city," replied Col. Moseley; and as Judy asked no more questions he turned to Ran and said:

"I find that you have had very little difficulty in prevailing on the Messrs. Walling to recognize your rights, Hay!"

"None whatever, sir; thanks to your strong letter!" replied Ran.

"Thanks to your strong proofs, rather. Who could withstand such overwhelming evidence? But, Hay, in none of your letters did you tell us who the rival claimant was, although I asked you to do so."

"I never got your letter containing such a request, sir, or I should have complied with it. The reason why I never volunteered the information was because the subject was a painful one. And, by the way, has not Mr. or Mrs. Walling told you who that impostor was?"

"No. I have not had five minutes' private conversation with them yet. Mrs. Walling may have told my wife by this time."

"Well, colonel, the claimant was, not my Uncle James' son, as I suspected, but a fraudulent adventurer whom we have known as Gentleman Geff."

"Gentleman Geff! Why, I thought he had been quite killed by the same parties that half killed you, and that his bones were buried in the old fort cemetery!"

"So did I. So did we all. But we were mistaken. The body buried in the cemetery for Gentleman Geff's was not

his, but that of some poor victim of border ruffianism, whose identification we shall, perhaps, never discover, and Gentleman Geff is alive and flourishing in stolen plumes on the continent of Europe."

"Tell me all about it!" exclaimed the colonel.

And Ran went over the story of Gentleman Geff's crimes, already so well known to our readers.

Col. Moseley listened with grave interest; Mike with open-mouthed wonder, Judy in stupefaction.

"I do not know why one should ever be surprised at anything that happens," mused the colonel.

"Bedad, meself is only shurprised that I nivir had the sinse to shuspect it," remarked Mike.

"And he that particular about his clane linen! Sure, I nivir less would have belaved it av sich a jintleman!" sighed Judy.

"Where is the scoundrel now?" inquired the colonel.

"Somewhere in Europe on his bridal tour," replied Ran.

"On his bridal tour?"

"Oh, yes," said Ran.

And then he told the story of Gentleman Geff's felonious marriage.

"A fine account he will have to settle!" exclaimed the colonel. "Two assaults, with intent to kill, one bigamy, divers forgeries and perjuries, to say nothing of the fraudulent claim of a name and estate to which he has no right."

"I shall not take a single step toward prosecuting him," said Ran.

"Ah! you won't! By the way, do you really sail on Saturday?"

"Yes, colonel, really. And, moreover, I mean to take Judy with me. Yes, indeed, sir. She is more than wealth, and rank, and culture, and every other worldly good. Sooner than part again, with half a sphere between us, we will get married first and go to school afterward," said Ran, taking Judy's hand within his own and keeping a close hold of it.

"Whe-ew! And what does Miss Judy say to that?" inquired the colonel.

"Sure, thin, sir," began Judy—but her face flamed and she mended her speech—"indeed, sir, I have consented to do as Ran wishes. Why should I not? Absence has tried us.

He has graived—suffered, that is. And as for myself, sir, there was many a time when I could have started to walk clear across the continent to go to him just as I walked through the wilderness to find him when he was wounded, only it would not have been—been—right, I suppose.”

“And so you mean really to marry this young fellow and go to Europe with him?”

“Yis—yes, if you please, sir.”

“But you said out there at the fort that you would not do it until—something or other, I have forgotten what.”

“Until he had seen something of the world, sir, to be sure of his own mind—that is what I mint—meant. And now it is not as if Ran and myself had only met lately at a party and took a sudden fancy to each other. We have known each other for years.”

“And, sir,” said Ran, “you must not think that we have given up the plan of education; for we have not. I have talked it over with my Cousin Cleve here, and settled upon a plan, to which Judy has agreed. We will marry, as I said, before we sail for England. After we have visited Haymore we will go to London, as being the place of places where we can live in the strictest retirement, unknown and untroubled, until education shall have fitted us to mingle with society. After which we will go and settle at Haymore. This is the best plan I can think of to keep us united. And I will not entertain any plan that is to part this dear, true girl from me, even for a season.”

“Bravo, my boy! Even if I had a right to set up any opposition to your wishes, I should not do it. And what is to be done with Mike?”

“Mike is my brother,” replied Ran. “He shall share with me in any way he likes. He shall go to England and live with us if he likes. Or stay here, and enter into any business that he may choose and be fit for.”

Col. Moseley looked at Ran, and thought him the most unselfish, the most unworldly individual he had ever seen in all the days of his life.

And so Ran was.

The colonel soon took leave, expressing his pleasure in the prospect of meeting his friends at Mr. Samuel Walling’s that evening.

“And now, young man, that I have shown you the way to

your sister's abiding-place, you will not need my guidance any longer. Good-day to you," he said to Mike as he left the room.

"Good-day, and many thanks for your shivility, sir," returned Mike.

It occurred to Ran then that perhaps Mike, in the simplicity of his heart, was staying longer than was convenient in the narrow quarters of his cousins; so very soon he asked him:

"Where are Longman and old Dandy staying? I should like to see them."

"Oh, they are at Markiss', away down on Water Street. They'd be proud to see you, Ran. Come with me, and I will take ye straight to them."

This was exactly what Ran wished. He arose and bade the two young women good-morning, and left the house with his friend.

Palma and Judy began to think of making preparations for the family dinner party at Mrs. Walling's.

Palma took out her crimson cashmere dress and gave it to Mrs. Pole to be brushed and shaken, sponged and pressed, and looked over her small stock of lace and gloves.

Judy looked down on her own brown traveling dress and said ruefully:

"This will never do to wear this evening. I have got a pretty dark blue French merino; but it is in my trunk at the hotel, and sure it might as well be in Aigypyt—Egypt, that is."

"Col. Moseley will be sure to send the trunk to you," suggested Palma. And even while she spoke a noise was heard outside and a knock came to the door, and the janitor entered the parlor, followed by a porter with the girl's trunk on his shoulders. When he put it down on the floor Stuart paid and discharged him, and shortly after left the house on his daily hopeless search for employment.

That evening Stuart, Palma, Hay, Judith, Col. and Mrs. Moseley, Mr. James and Miss Betty Moseley met at dinner at Mr. Samuel Walling's. A happier party never gathered around a table.

After dinner the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room, leaving the gentlemen to their wine.

In the drawing-room Mrs. Moseley introduced the subject of Ran and Judy's proposed marriage. She said to Judy:

"My dear, we are all friends here—intimate friends, indeed—so it is quite proper that I should speak plainly. My young favorite, Mr. Hay, has taken counsel with me concerning his wish to marry you and take you to Europe with him. Am I right in supposing that this is your wish also?"

"Yis—yes, madam," replied Judy, modestly lowering her eyes.

"Then, dear, are you willing that Mrs. Stuart and myself should make all the arrangements for you?"

"I should be very grateful to you, madam."

"Look here! I am not going to be left out in the cold!" exclaimed Augusta Walling, laughing and joining the circle.

"Of course you are not! How should you be, when we are hoping that the wedding breakfast will be served right here in your house on Saturday morning next?" said Mrs. Moseley, well knowing that she might take a much greater liberty than that with her old schoolmate.

"That will be perfectly delightful!" exclaimed Mrs. Walling. "I adore a wedding breakfast at home, and never expected to enjoy one until my own daughter, now at Vassar, grows up and gets married. Miss Judith, shall this be so? Will you place yourself in my hands?"

"Sure and"—brightly exclaimed Judy, and then she stopped suddenly, blushed and amended her speech—"I should be glad and grateful, ma'am," she answered.

Then Mrs. Walling turned to Palma, saying:

"And you will give me back your guest in time? You are rather too young a matron to chaperon a bride-elect," she added with a smile.

"As you and my cousins please, dear Mrs. Walling. I should myself be very happy to serve them, but I will not stand in the way of another who can do so much better," replied Palma.

"That's a dear, unselfish angel!" exclaimed Mrs. Walling. And then the four women formed themselves into a committee of ways and means, and discussed wedding breakfasts, trousseaus and so forth, treating Judy with as much freedom, tenderness and liberality as if she had been their own child, until the gentlemen came in and the subject was dropped.

The evening passed so pleasantly that it was late when the party broke up.

Stuart, Palma, Ran and Judy returned to their flat.

Stuart had not been able to find a room for Judy. All the rooms were in suites. One more night he had to sleep as well as he could on the short sofa, while Judy shared Palma's bed.

But the next day, toward the afternoon, Mrs. Walling came for Judy, to take her to the Walling home to make preparations for her marriage on Saturday.

"The Moseleys," she said, "have secured a fine old manor house at Fort Washington, about fifteen minutes by rail from New York. It is completely furnished and in perfect readiness for occupation. The family are in Europe, and the house has been left in the care of an agent, who has just kept it in perfect order. They leave us to-night; so you see we have room for a score of young girls, if we could find them."

Palma made no objection to the departure of Judy, but kissed her an affectionate good-by; and Mrs. Walling took the girl and the girl's little trunk away with her in the luxurious family carriage.

And Ran forsook the Stuarts and spent that evening with the Wallings, returning quite late to his suite of rooms on their flat. But, under the circumstances, his cousins forgave him.

CHAPTER X

A WEDDING AND OTHER INCIDENTS

STUART and Palma were both very glad and very grateful that Mrs. Walling had undertaken all the responsibilities of their cousin's wedding. They knew that her means were ample, and that Walling & Walling were advancing, and would continue to advance, any sum that Randolph or Judith might require for their personal preparations. They knew also that Mrs. Walling was sincerely delighted with the idea of the wedding celebration at her own house; whereas, had it been settled to come off at the Stuarts'

apartments, Stuart, from impecuniosity, and Palma, from inexperience, would have been very much embarrassed.

Mrs. Walling was in her element selecting a proper trousseau and outfit for Judy.

She came in her carriage every morning to take Palma out shopping with her and Judy. Mrs. Moseley could not accompany the party; not because she was a little way out of town, for the cars ran all the time and would have brought her in in fifteen minutes, but because she was "up to her eyes in business" settling her large family in their new home.

So Mrs. Walling, Palma, and Judy went out together every day, until all the shopping was completed.

Judy's outfit was a very complete but not a very costly one.

"You know, dear," Mrs. Walling explained to Palma, "that our little friend is not going at all into society for two or three years to come. The young pair will live very quietly somewhere, to advance their education, before they show themselves to their neighbors at Haymore; and so she will really need little more than a schoolgirl's 'kist.' Her wedding dress, of course, must be a pretty one, and her traveling dress must be very nice, but the others plain and simple and inexpensive."

Palma agreed to the prudence of all this. And Judy said never a word. She left her affairs entirely in the hands of her two friends.

While the lady shopped for Judy she shopped for herself as well. But, after a day or two, she could not but notice that Palma bought nothing; that she let all the tempting goods, so pretty and so cheap, pass under her admiring eyes unpurchased.

"What is the matter with the young one?" inquired Augusta of herself. "Doesn't she care for dress at all?" Then she remembered that she had never seen Mrs. Stuart in but two dresses, and very inexpensive ones at that, namely, an India muslin, sometimes, in her evenings at home, and a fine crimson cashmere for visiting. And then it occurred to Augusta Walling that the Stuarts might be in straitened circumstances; and her heart was touched with sympathy for the beautiful young woman who saw so many attractive articles of adornment pass under her eyes or be

bought by others without being able to buy one of them. And she wondered how she might make Palma a pretty present without giving offense.

"I hate the rôle of a pretended benefactress. I should shrink from such an imputation. Lovely little creature! how elegant she would look in a ruby velvet, with duchess lace! And she shall have it! Yes, that she shall! And I will take the risk of being snubbed and stood in a corner for my impertinence."

The outcome of the lady's resolution was this: After she had set down Palma at the Stuarts' apartments, and taken Judy home to the Walling house, she set out on a second shopping expedition.

The same night, while Stuart was taking his usual walk up and down the pavement before the house, and Palma sat in her little room stitching fresh edges on frayed collars and cuffs, one of Lovelace & Silkman's young ladies arrived at the apartment home, followed by a boy with a large bandbox, and asked for Mrs. Cleve Stuart. She was brought up in the elevator and ushered into the presence of Palma, who arose to receive the unexpected visitor, staring a little. The stranger merely nodded to the lady, then, without any preface, she took the bandbox from the boy, set it on a chair, untied, unwrapped and opened it, and took from it a glorious suit of dark, bright blue damassé velvet, trimmed with satin, and spread it over a chair, saying:

"If it is convenient, I would like to have you try it on now, ma'am, so that I may make any alterations that may be necessary before I leave."

"But I——" began the wondering Palma, when she was suddenly interrupted by the dressmaker exclaiming:

"Oh! I beg your pardon! I forgot!" And she handed a note addressed to Mrs. Cleve Stuart.

Palma took it in perplexity, opened it, and read:

"Beauty to the beautiful! To Palma Stuart, with the true love of Augusta Walling."

Palma was touched, melted, delighted all at once. She had never had, nor ever expected to have, so superb a dress. She was but a child in some things. She could not speak for surprise, gratitude and embarrassment.

But the matter-of-fact young woman from the suit department of Lovelace & Silkman's went on to say:

"We were very sorry that we had not a ruby velvet made up, but the lady who gave us your order said that there would be no time to make up one, and she selected this; and I really think, madam, that this shade of mazarine blue will be quite as becoming to your brunette style as garnet or ruby."

"It is beautiful! It could not be more beautiful!" exclaimed Palma.

"Will you try it on now?"

Palma arose and the dressmaker helped to relieve her of her cashmere dress and induct her into the velvet.

But slight alteration was necessary—the front breadth shortened, the sleeves shortened, the side seams of the waist taken in—that was all.

The young dressmaker laid off her hat and her wraps, and took from her little hand-bag needle, sewing silk, scissors and thimble, and sat down to work.

Then Palma, having nothing else to occupy herself with while the dressmaker sat there, began idly to rummage among the silver tissue paper in the bottom of the big band-box, and there she found another box—a smaller one—which she took out to examine. It had her name on it. She opened the box and found a fichu and pocket handkerchief of duchess lace, a pair of the finest white kid gloves, a lovely fan, and a little turban of velvet and satin to match her dress.

The dressmaker soon finished her task, folded the dress, returned it to the box, and took her leave.

Then Palma started up, like the delighted child that she was, opened the box again, took out the elegant dress, spread it all over the sofa to display its beauties to the best advantage, and called in Mrs. Pole to admire it; and when that good woman had risen to as much enthusiasm as she was capable of—for a suit—and returned to her own dominions, Palma still left it there, that Stuart might be regaled with the vision when he should come in.

When Cleve did come in and was shown the present and the note that came with it he looked rather grave; he did not like presents, would much rather that his pretty little wife had continued to wear her shabby red cashmere, rather

than be indebted to any one for a sapphire velvet; but it was too late to prevent her acceptance of it now, so he quickly cleared his brow and admired the dress to her heart's content.

On that same evening Ran was, as usual, spending the hour with Mrs. Walling and Judy. There was no other company. Ran had a secret source of distress, and it was this—his humble, faithful friends down at Markiss' Hotel, in the lower part of the city. They certainly did not belong to the Walling "set." Conventionally, they were a long, long way below that set; yet Ran wanted them to be present both at his wedding and at the wedding breakfast, and that wedding was to be celebrated at one of the most "fashionable" churches in the city; and that wedding breakfast was to be given at Mrs. Walling's. How could Ran ask that very fine lady to invite his humble friends? And, on the other hand, how could he slight those faithful friends? Mike, his brother-in-law expectant, must come, of course; that was to be taken for granted, and then Longman, who had rescued him on the night when he was shot, and who had actually saved his life—Longman ought certainly to come. And, finally, poor old Andrew Quin ought not to be left—the only one—"out in the cold."

While Ran was turning these matters over in his mind he was not noticing what Mrs. Walling was doing. That good lady sat at a small writing-desk busy with note paper and envelopes. Presently she said:

"Randolph, dear, give me the address of those good friends of yours."

"Friends, madam!" exclaimed Ran, the more taken by surprise that he had been just thinking of them. It seemed to him that the lady must have read his thoughts.

"Yes, those old friends of yours who came on with Judy and the Moseleys and are boarding somewhere down in the city while waiting for their steamer."

"Oh! yes, madam! You mean Samson Longman and Andrew Quin? They are with Michael at Markiss' on Water Street. I do not know the number."

"That is not necessary. I am sending them invitations to the wedding and the breakfast; for though, of course, such a hasty affair as this is will not admit of much ceremony and elaboration, yet they must be present. There will

be the Moseleys, the Stuarts, ourselves and your friends from Markiss'."

"I should tell you beforehand that those friends of mine come from a mining camp, and though good and true as men can be, they are rough and plain."

"Well, my dear boy, I have told you who is coming, and so you may know that these friends will meet no one in our house who will be so silly as to look down upon them for being rough and plain. Really, Ran, dear, it ought not to be necessary for me to say this," concluded the lady.

For all answer, Randolph Hay went to her side, raised her hand and pressed it to his lips with reverential tenderness.

Judy looked up in her face with eyes full of tears and murmured:

"The Lord in heaven bless you, sweet and lovely lady!"

Mrs. Walling smiled deprecatingly at this effusiveness and patted Judy gently on the head. Then she turned to her writing-desk and wrote her informal notes. These were the only invitations the lady had written. The few others to the members of the two families more immediately concerned had been verbal ones.

When she had finished directing the envelopes she handed them over to Ran, saying:

"The letter box is directly on your way home; will you mind dropping them in?"

"I will take charge of them with pleasure," said Ran, and as the hour was late he arose, said good-night and left the house.

But Ran did not drop the notes in a letter box. He walked over to Sixth Avenue, hailed a car, boarded it and rode down as far as that car would take him, then got out and walked to Markiss'; for he was anxious that his friends should get their bids as soon as possible. He found Mike, Longman, and Dandy all sitting smoking in the grimy back parlor behind Markiss' bar.

He entered and sat down among them. There happened to be no other guests in the room.

"Well, boys, did you think I had forgotten you?" inquired Ran, really remorseful for not having sought them out before.

"If we did we excused you, under the circumstances," replied Longman, speaking for the rest.

"I suppose Mike has told you that I am to marry his sister on Saturday morning—that is, the day after to-morrow?"

"Oh, ay! trust Mike for that!" cried old Dandy with a little giggle.

"Well, I have come to-night to bring you invitations to be present at the ceremony in the church and afterward at the breakfast at the house. And, boys, you must be sure to come."

"And where am I to get the widding garment proper for the occasion? Sure, there's no time to be cutted and fitted and made dacint to appear in sich grand company, though I thank the lady all the same," said Andrew Quin.

"Why, Dandy! Don't you know that you are in New York, where you can be fitted out for a wedding or a funeral or an Arctic expedition in five minutes—more or less?" laughed Ran.

"Yes; it's more or less, I'll allow. But I do reckon I can get a ready-made suit of clothes reasonable enough here."

"Certainly you can! But you must let me see to that, Dandy. I will be down here again to-morrow. And, lest I should forget to tell you, I must do so now. On Saturday morning you must let Mike bring you to the church. He knows where it is."

"All right, Misther Hay," said Dandy.

"And, Longman, you have not promised, but you will come, I am sure. My friends uptown wish to make the acquaintance of the Nimrod who saved my life."

"Oh, Mr. Hay!" laughed the giant deprecatingly. "But I shall be proud to come to your wedding," he added.

Then Ran bade them good-night and went home.

The next day—Friday—was the last before the wedding and the sailing. There were yet a few articles to be purchased, and so Mrs. Walling got ready to go on her usual morning shopping round. She asked Judy to put on her hat to go with her.

She did not intend to call for Palma on this occasion; a feeling of delicacy withheld her from going into the way of her thanks.

But while the carriage was standing at the door, and

while Mrs. Walling was waiting in the parlor for Judy to join her, Mrs. Cleve Stuart was announced and entered the room.

Palma went straight up to Mrs. Walling with outstretched hands and glowing eyes and said:

"How shall I thank you for the rich, beautiful dress—the soft, lovely, caressing dress—that folds me around with the feeling of a friend's embrace—your embrace?"

For answer the lady drew the speaker to her bosom and kissed her, smiling.

"I want you to know," continued Palma, "that I feel more comfort in this than I should if I had bought it myself out of boundless riches."

Again Mrs. Walling kissed her, laughing this time.

"Every time I put it on I shall feel your love around me."

The elder lady pressed both the younger one's hands and said:

"We are going out to try to find a suitable sea cloak for Judy. We must find an extra heavy one. It will be terribly cold crossing the ocean at this season. They will be on the banks of Newfoundland in the first days of December. Will you go with us?"

"With pleasure," said Palma. And as Judy now entered the room, ready dressed for the drive, they arose to go out. But just at that moment Mrs. Duncan was announced and came in.

Both Mrs. Walling and Palma received her as cordially as if she had not interrupted their departure. Mrs. Walling then introduced:

"My young friend, Miss Judith Man."

"How do you do, my dear? I am glad to see you," said the visitor.

Judy bowed and smiled.

"You are going out. Don't let me detain you. I was on my way down to Fourteenth Street to do a little shopping and just dropped in here to tell you a piece of news; but I can take another opportunity," Mrs. Duncan explained.

"Oh, no! Pray do not! We should die of suspense! Pray, sit right down and open your budget. Our errand can wait as well as yours. It is only shopping. And when you are ready for yours you would oblige us by taking the

fourth seat in our carriage, so that we can go together," Mrs. Walling pleaded.

Mrs. Duncan laid down her muff and shopping bag and seated herself in one of the luxurious armchairs.

Mrs. Walling rang a bell and gave an order:

"Bring coffee into this room."

And presently the four women had tiny china cups in their hands, sipping hot and fragrant Mocha, three of them listening while the fourth told her news.

"It is about Jennie Montgomery, the true wife of the counterfeit Randolph Hay——" began the speaker.

"Yes! yes!" eagerly exclaimed Mrs. Walling and Palma in a breath, while Judy looked up in eager curiosity.

"You know, without any one's planning—unless fate be some one—that Jennie and her child were passengers on the same steamship, and even in the same cabin, with her fraudulent husband and his false bride?"

"Yes! yes!"

"I said when I discovered that complication that those elements were as explosive as dynamite. Neither could have expected the presence of the other on the steamer, and so I was really anxious to hear what happened when Miss Leegh and her 'bridegroom' met his lawful wife and child on the ship, on the ocean, whence neither could escape without jumping into the sea."

"Well, have you heard?" impatiently demanded Mrs. Walling.

"Yes; I have just received a long letter from Jennie, dated November 15th. She had been at home four weeks before she found time to write to me."

"And——" breathlessly exclaimed Mrs. Walling.

"She met her husband on the deck of the steamer. She was as much astonished as he was confounded. But I had better read her letter to you."

And the visitor drew a thickly packed envelope, with a foreign stamp, from her pocket, and read the pages describing Jennie's voyage, her meeting with her husband and Miss Leegh on the *Scorpio*, and her arrival at home in her father's new vicarage, as these events are already known to our readers.

"To think of Jennie's self-control and forbearance!" concluded Mrs. Duncan.

"And to think of Lamia Leegh's insolence in trying to patronize her, the real wife of her own 'brevet' bridegroom!" exclaimed Mrs. Walling.

"And to think of the man's assurance in carrying off matters with such a high hand!" remarked Palma.

"Och, sure, and himself had always the impidence av the divil, had Gentleman Geff!" exclaimed Judy, surprised into her dialect; then, suddenly aware of her "backsliding," she clapped her hand to her mouth a minute too late and looked frightened; but as she saw that neither of her friends were in the least disturbed she felt relieved, while the visitor evidently thought that the brogue had been humorously assumed for the occasion, for she replied in kind:

"Ay, has he—the thaif av the worruld!" Then, turning to Mrs. Walling, she continued: "What an active fate there seems to be at work here! Did you see the significance of the latter part of Jennie's letter?"

"Yes, of course; her father has left Medge, in the south of England, and is in temporary charge of Haymore vicarage, in the north of England," replied Mrs. Walling.

"And our Gentleman Geff of the many wives and aliases, in trying to escape his one real wife and avoid her father by getting off the steamer at Queenstown will unwittingly rush into their power again the moment he sets foot within his stolen estate at Haymore. Now, if his lawful wife had been anybody else there might be a chance for a show of fight. But the daughter of the Vicar of Haymore!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Walling, drawing her breath hard.

"Jennie writes of the great preparations they are making at Haymore to receive the usurping squire, who is now expected to arrive with a large party of invited friends for the Christmas holidays, little knowing that he will there meet his lawful wife and her avenging, priestly father."

"And confront the lawful heir of Haymore with the more terrible family solicitors," laughed Mrs. Walling.

"Then Mr. Randolph Hay is really going over at once to take possession of his estates?" inquired the visitor.

"Yes; he sails on Saturday; but not alone—he takes his wife with him. He will be married on Saturday morning and embark in the afternoon."

"Ah, indeed! That is news. I had heard no rumor of

his being engaged, or even attentive to any of our girls. Who is she?"

"My young friend here," replied Mrs. Walling, pointing to Judy.

Mrs. Duncan jumped up and kissed the girl with effusions and congratulations.

Judy blushed and smiled and bowed, but did not venture to speak again.

"The wedding is to be quiet. We don't want a second edition of the 'princely nuptials' of 'Mr. Randolph Hay' and Miss Lamia Leegh. They, we think, have done enough in that way 'for the honor of the family.' Our wedding must be very plain. There are 'no cards.' I will not say there will also be 'no cake, no nothing.' So, as you are interested, if you will drop in, 'promiscuously,' at the 'Little Church Around the Corner' about ten o'clock to-morrow morning, you will witness one of the happiest, though not one of the grandest, weddings on record."

"I shall do myself that pleasure without a doubt," replied Mrs. Duncan.

And then she arose and took up her muff and hand-bag to intimate that she was ready to go.

And the four ladies entered the close carriage that was waiting at the door and went on their shopping expedition.

It was perfectly successful, even to the sea cloak, a heavy cloth one, reaching from head to heel, having long sleeves and hood, and lined throughout with fur.

They took Mrs. Duncan to her door.

"There is one thing I would rather see than the wedding," said Mrs. Duncan.

"And what is that?" inquired Augusta Walling.

"The circus at Haymore Court when Mr. Randolph Hay and his wife arrive there and meet Gentleman Geff and Miss Lamia Leegh."

CHAPTER XI.

A BLITHE BRIDAL

It was a splendid winter morning. The snow, which had fallen thickly during the night, was now frozen hard on the

ground, the housetops and the trees, and sparkled like frosted silver sprinkled with diamond dust in the dazzling sunshine.

Mrs. Walling's household was astir. They were to have an early family breakfast before dressing to go to church.

Mrs. Walling and her young protégée met in the breakfast room. Judy was pale and nervous.

"Good-morning, my dear. Do you see that the clouds have gone with the night? A good omen for you, according to the folklore—'Blessed is the bride that the sun shines on,' " said the lady as she drew the girl to her bosom and pressed a kiss on her brow.

"Oh, ma'am, I have prayed the Lord to bless the day for Ran's sake, but my heart misgives me, ma'am," sighed Judy.

"That is very natural, but in your case very unreasonable, my child. I never knew nuptials more promising for future happiness than are yours and Randolph's."

"Oh, but, ma'am, am I a fit wife for a gentleman?"

"Not for every gentleman; for there are not so many gentlemen who would be as worthy of you as Randolph Hay is. But why should you think that you are not fit for him?"

"Oh, ma'am, I am only a poor, ignorant girl, and, with all the pains you and Mrs. Moseley have taken with me, I have not been able to improve much. Only yesterday I forgot my manners before the strange lady."

"You mean that you fell for a moment into the sweet dialect of your childhood? That did no harm, Judy. And, besides, when you go to London you will soon drop it altogether."

"We are to live in retirement, to be sure, until we are both trained for society, I know. But still, for all that, I fear I am doing Ran a wrong to marry him."

"Look here, Judy! You and Randolph were engaged to be married to each other, I think, while you were both in the miners' camp—you a miner's sister; Ran a miner and the partner of your brother. You, neither of you, dreamed of any higher position or better fortune than luck in the mines might bring you. Is it not so?"

"Yes, madam."

"Very well, then. Now suppose that it had been to you, instead of to Randolph, that the unexpected fortune had

come? Suppose that some nobleman of high rank and wealth had suddenly come forward and claimed you as his lost child and heiress, would you then have broken off with poor Ran, because he was only a poor miner?"

"No! No! No!" cried Judy with flashing eyes and rising excitement. "I nivir could a bin such a baste av the wurruld!"

Then she suddenly stopped and clapped her hands to her lips.

"But if Randolph had taken it into his head that he, a poor miner, was no fit husband for you under your changed circumstances, what would you have done?"

"I should have broken me harrt entirely!" exclaimed Judy, falling again into dialect, as she always did when strongly moved.

"And yet you can talk about not being a fit wife for Randolph, just because, since his engagement to you, he has come into a fortune. My dear, you should consider your betrothal so sacred that no change of fortune could be able to affect it."

"I see it, ma'am! I see it! And I will say no more about it," said Judy, smiling through her timid tears.

"And now we will have breakfast," said Mrs. Walling, rising and ringing the bell.

The tray was brought in at one door, while Mr. Walling came in at the other, and the three sat down to breakfast, the master of the house merely greeting the guest with a kindly:

"Good-morning, my dear," as he took his seat at the table.

As soon as breakfast was finished they separated to dress for church.

I would like, also, to give my reader a glimpse of the young bridegroom-expectant on this the morning of his wedding day, in his temporary home in the apartment house occupied by Stuart and Palma.

The three young people breakfasted together in the little, elegant parlor of the Stuarts' suite of rooms, Mrs. Pole waiting on them.

Ran's face shone with joy that he could not hide; Cleve's and Palma's were bright with sympathetic smiles.

Ran had entreated Mike Man to come and share his

rooms at these flats until the wedding day and the embarkation for Europe, but Mike had steadily refused, declaring that, well as he loved his brother-in-law, he would be out of place among Ran's fine friends, and that he would feel more at home "along wid Samson and Dandy." Mike had decided to accompany these old friends to Europe, in the second cabin of the same steamer on which Ran had taken a stateroom in the first cabin for himself and his bride. These three miners were going home to the old country to settle there. Different motives actuated the three. Old Dandy wished to spend his declining years among old friends. Longman wanted to return to his aged and widowed mother. Mike could not stay behind all his friends, and must go with them.

What each was to do on the other side of the ocean was not very clear, even to themselves. Each had a little money saved up. Dandy thought he would sink his savings in a life annuity. Longman hoped to get a gamekeeper's place on some estate. Mike wanted to go to school for a little while. He was really nineteen years old, but so small and slender that he might easily have passed for a schoolboy. But he meant to keep near his mining "pards," so as not to "inthrude" on Ran and Judy and their fine friends.

Vainly had faithful Ran combated this resolution. Mike had been firm, and Ran had to yield the point.

Now, as Ran sat at table with Stuart and Palma, the latter said to him:

"You and Judy will be married as Cleve and myself were—without bridesmaid or groomsman."

"Yes," said Ran; "but it is not my fault or Judy's. I wanted Judy's brother, my old partner, Mike Man, to be my groomsman, which would have been right enough; but Mike stoutly refused. If Mike had consented to stand up with me, then Judy might have had a bridesmaid in one of the Moseley young ladies. But, no; Mike was as stubborn as a mule. To be sure, I know that Mr. Jim Moseley and Miss Betty Moseley would have kindly stood up with us, but Judy said no; and so we must stand up alone."

"It is just as well. And now, my dear," said Palma, rising from her seat with a pretty little matronly air of authority, "as you have finished your breakfast, you had better go and dress yourself. Your carriage was ordered

at half-past nine, I think. When you have finished, come to me that I may put the last touches on your toilet—twirl the curls and mustache, and pin the boutonnière, as you have no valet. Though, I suppose, you will set up some Monsieur Frangipanni as your personal attendant and dresser."

"Thank you, Cousin Palma. Never! Never! I should be too much in awe of such a grand dignitary," said Ran, laughing, as he left the room.

"What a happy dog he is, my dear," exclaimed Stuart to his wife as they also retired to dress for the wedding.

Meanwhile, at this same hour, in an upper room at Markiss' Hotel on Water Street, another scene of preparation was going on.

Samson Longman, Andrew Quin, and Michael Man were dressing for the wedding.

The three men were fresh from the bath and the barber. Longman had his hair cut and his fine, flowing beard dressed, and, with his strong, regular features and his clear, blue eyes, looked a very handsome colossus, indeed. He wore a fashionable dress suit of black cloth, with a vest of black satin, a small white tie, a tea rose in his buttonhole, white kid gloves and patent leather boots.

He looked every inch a gentleman, as he really was.

Dandy had had his red hair and side whiskers trimmed and dressed. He also wore a dress suit of exactly the same style of Longman's, even to the little details of the white tie, tea rose, kid gloves and patent leathers.

Mike, with his short, dark, curly hair neatly arranged, his fresh face, innocent of beard or mustache, and his slight figure in a dress suit proper to the occasion, looked like a boy got up for a birthday party, or a freshman ready for his first college exhibition.

"Come, Mike! Stop admiring yourself and hurry up. Dandy, come! It is nine o'clock, and time to start if we are to reach the church and get seated in time to see the wedding party come in," said Longman.

"Eh, Lorrd! But me courage has sunk down into the bottom av me boots! What would ail me to be pushing meself amongst gentlefolk, anyway?" exclaimed the nervous old man.

"Because it is my own Ran and Judy's wedding, sure,

and you are invited. And they would feel hurt by your absence," replied Mike.

"Eh, Lorrd, I wouldn't mind the church so much. Sure, ivirybody's free to go into a church. But it's the breakfast. Sure, an' I nivir sat down to the table wid gentlefolks in all my life, and wouldn't know more'n the babe just born how to behave myself, Lorrd! and if all tales be thrue, gentlefolks' ways at table is that diffunt from our'n!" sighed Dandy.

"I suppose they eat, and drink, and talk, and laugh pretty much as other people do. Take courage, Dandy, old man. Just look at yourself in the glass! Why, you might be a Wall Street millionaire, or a college professor, or a United States Senator, to look at you," laughed Longman.

"I know!" exclaimed Dandy with a self-satisfied smirk after glancing at the mirror. "Sure, 'fine feathers make fine birds!' And it is not how I look, at all, at all, but how I'm to behave, what I'm to say, and what I'm to do. That's what bothers me."

"Oh, bosh! You needn't do anything nor say anything unless you like to. As for behaving, just watch other people and behave as they do."

"Now, that's a first-rate idea o' your'n, Longman—first-rate. And I'll jist be guided by that. I'll watch the gentry, and behave jist as they do, and thin I can't do amiss!" exclaimed Dandy, brightening up.

A very dangerous rule, with many unsuspected exceptions.

"And now put on your overcoats and draw your woolen mittens over your white kids, and come along, you two, or we shall be late," said Longman, who had already put on all his outer garments and stood ready to march.

When the three men were quite ready they went downstairs together, walked over to the Fourth Avenue cars, boarded one and rode uptown; got out at Blank Street, and walked to the church.

There was no sign about the building to indicate a wedding for that morning. The doors were closed, and there was not a carriage nor a human being near the sacred building.

The truth is that the Wallings and all concerned in the affair had kept the intended wedding not only out of the

papers but out of all gossiping circles. They did not want to have a sensational supplement to the magnificent pageantry of the grand Hay-Leegh wedding. And their reticence had even extended to a firm refusal to indorse any journalistic report of the appearance of the rightful claimant to the Haymore estate.

"Don't you think we hev bin afther making a mistake in the place, Mr. Longman?" inquired Dandy, looking mistrustingly up to the closed and silent building.

"No; we're the first that's come, that's all. Walk in."

And so saying he led the way, opening first the great black walnut outer door and then the red cloth inner door and entering the church.

There they found the sexton, who asked them for cards.

Longman produced the three informal notes written by Mrs. Walling, and the sexton, after looking at them, marshaled the three men up the aisle, between empty pews, to seats near the altar, where they sat down.

When they had become accustomed to the "dim religious light" of the interior, they perceived that they themselves were the only persons in the church.

"You see that we are early," said Longman.

"Well, sure, thin, I'm not sorry. I can compose the narves av me," replied Dandy.

They drew off their overcoats, folded them, and put them under the seats, shoved their silk hats after the coats, and then took off their woolen mitts, rolled them up, and put them in their pockets, and posed themselves for the scene expected.

Presently the door opened and quite a large party entered, and were led by the sexton to the front row of pews before the chancel.

"It's the bowld Col. Moseley and his tribe, sure," said Mike in a low voice to his companions.

Dandy looked up.

It was the tribe, indeed. The colonel, his wife and ten of his girls and boys. The two youngest children had been left at home on account of their tender age. The colonel's wife wore her Sunday suit of brown satin, with a brown velvet bonnet and a rich old India shawl that had been an heirloom in her family, having come down to her from her great-grandmother. Her many daughters wore plain car-

dinal-red or navy-blue dresses, with plush coats and felt hats to match.

Next entered a single pair, unknown to Longman and Dandy, but not to us. They were Mr. and Mrs. Cleve Stuart. Palma wore her lovely suit of navy-blue demassée velvet, with turban to match.

They were provided with seats to the left of the Moseleys.

A few minutes after them came a lady alone. She was Mrs. Duncan, in a plum-colored satin dress and a sealskin coat and cap.

Finally, just as the organ began to peal forth a magnificent wedding march, streamed in two processions from two opposite points.

First, out from the vestry door came two white-robed clergymen, with open books in their hands, followed by the bridegroom, in evening dress, with a white rose in his buttonhole.

"Ah, thin, see till our broth av a b'hoy! Sure, don't his face shine like the morning starr itself?" whispered Dandy to his companion.

Longman looked and saw Ran, with his brow radiant with frank happiness which he did not think of suppressing.

"Whish! Look down the aisle itself! There comes me swate swishter! Och! what an angel!" murmured Mike.

Longman looked and smiled.

Dandy turned his head and caught his breath. He had never in all his life seen anything half so lovely as little Judy in her bridal array. And yet her dress was simple enough. She wore a plain white silk, trained; a white tulle overskirt, looped with sprays of oragne buds; a white tulle veil, fastened above her curly, black hair with sprigs of orange buds; and on her neck and arms a set of pearls given her by Ran. Her eyes were cast down until their long, sweeping, black lashes lay on her slightly flushed oval cheeks. She came slowly, leaning on the arm of Samuel Walling, who was to give her away.

No doubt her brother would have been asked to perform this service, but that he was under age. And, besides, he would have shrunk from the honor of taking so conspicuous a part in the ceremony, since he would not even officiate as groomsman.

Behind them came Mrs. Samuel Walling, in a superb suit

of ruby brocaded velvet, with turban to match. She was leaning on the arm of her brother-in-law, Mr. William Walling.

The two clergymen advanced to the altar railing with open books in their hands.

The bridegroom met the bride and took her hand; both bowed to the officiating ministers, and then knelt down on the hassocks before the altar.

Their immediate friends drew around them. The company in the pews stood up.

Mike bent eagerly, breathlessly forward.

The ceremony began. It continued amid a breathless silence, unbroken except by the voices of the officiating ministers and responses of the kneeling pair before them, and the short reply of the "church father" in bestowing "this woman" upon "this man."

After the benediction was pronounced friends crowded around the newly wedded young pair with congratulations that were not merely conventional, but earnest, heartfelt.

Mike crept out of his pew, glided easily through the crowd, and stood before his sister and brother-in-law, mute, unable to speak, still looking like a very shy schoolboy at his college exhibition.

But Ran seized his hand and shook it heartily, and held it fast while he said:

"Mike—dear boy—we were always brothers in heart, and now we are brothers in reality! Are you not going to embrace your sister? She is not less your sister because she is my wife, but more so, for she has married your bosom's everlasting brother."

Mike then turned to Judy, who opened her arms and folded him to her heart in a warm embrace.

Longman and Dandy hung back for a little while, and then the old man stood up and said:

"I can't stand it at all, at all! Sure, I must go and spake to the darlints!"

And out of the pew he went, and up to the chancel, where "fine" friends were still surrounding the young pair.

They made way for the eager old man as he pushed through the group and confronted Ran and Judy, offering each a hand and crying with emotion:

"I've come to wish ye the blissing av the Lord and all

His holy saints, me brave bhoy and gurrul—I mane Mither and Mithress Randolph Hay av Hayti!”

Ran and Judy took each a hand of the old miner and said something inarticulate in kindly thanks. Then, seeing Longman standing behind and towering above Dandy, Ran held up his hand and the colossus came forward and offered his congratulations, which both Ran and Judy received with much hearty feeling.

“I do not forget, Longman, that I never should have lived to see this happy day but for you,” said Ran, warmly pressing his hands, while Judy’s smile expressed all that she also would have said if she could have spoken.

“Come, my young friends,” said Mr. Samuel Walling, approaching the group, “we must not keep the reverend gentlemen waiting; we must go into the vestry room and sign the register.” And he drew Judy’s arm within his own and carried her off, followed by Ran and the rest.

When this form was completed the small company left the church.

There were but two carriages waiting before the door. One was Mrs. Walling’s, in which she had brought the bride to the church; the other was Ran’s, in which he was going to take his wife back.

Mrs. Walling stood until she had seen Ran hand Judy into the clarence and take his seat beside her, when she turned to William Walling and said:

“Well! I would like to give you a seat back to the house; but I want to take in Mr. and Mrs. Stuart. Go up in the street car—that is a good fellow! And while you are at it see after those poor fellows from the mines. Get them into the same car with yourself, so that they won’t miss their way.”

“All right!” exclaimed good-humored Mr. Will. “Where are the bears?”

“There they are!” she said, nodding toward the three men coming from the church door. “Go and introduce yourself to them, and then you will be capable of bringing them up to the house and presenting them to your brother and myself. They are great friends of Ran, you know. One of them saved his life! They came with the colonel’s family and Judy from California. Now be off!” added the

lady as she saw her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Stuart, approaching, and went to meet them, saying to Palma:

"My dear, I have been waiting for you to come out. I have two vacant places in my carriage. I should be much pleased if you and Mr. Stuart would take them."

"Thank you very much. You are very kind," said Palma, accepting the offer as frankly as it was given.

Stuart bowed—there was nothing left for him to say or do. The "ladies" had made the arrangement! That was enough for the Southern gentleman.

They entered the carriage with Mr. and Mrs. Walling and were driven rapidly uptown.

The colonel's large family crowded into a street car.

Will Walling, Longman and Dandy found seats in another car.

And so the wedding guests went their way to the Walling house.

Arrived there, the ladies and children, only nine in all, were shown into an upper room to lay off their bonnets and wraps and add bouquets and white kid gloves to their toilets.

The gentlemen, ten in all, were shown into another room for light changes.

And after half an hour's performances they all filed down to the drawing-room, where they found their host and hostess, and the bride and groom, waiting to receive them.

Here also the wedding presents were on view for a short time, before being packed and dispatched to the steamer, which was to be effected while the company should be at table. There was a silver tea service from Mr. and Mrs. Walling; a silver salver from Mr. Will; a gold watch and chain from Col. and Mrs. Moseley; a box of fine handkerchiefs from Cleve and Palma Stuart—this was the same box that had been given by Cleve to Palma months before, but not a handkerchief had been disturbed, and having nothing else to give she gave it now, with Cleve's consent. There was a gold chain and cross from Mike; a pretty handbag from Longman, a workbox from Dandy, and various dainty trifles, mostly of their own manufacture, from the Moseley girls and boys.

A little later the butler slid back the rolling portières and announced breakfast, which was laid in a long rear room.

The wedding party—host and hostess, bride and groom, and guests, filed in and seated themselves at the table—nine on each side, host and hostess at the head and foot. Ran and Judy sat on the right side of Mrs. Walling, Col. and Mrs. Moseley on her left. Below Judy sat Mr. and Mrs. Cleve Stuart. Below Mrs. Moseley sat Mr. William Walling and Mrs. Duncan.

Longman sat on Mr. Walling's right hand, and Dandy on his left. Other guests, chiefly the young people of the colonel's family, filled all the other seats. Mike sat half-way up on the right side of the board.

Two waiters, in black dress suits, white satin waistcoats and kid gloves, served the guests.

Tea, coffee or chocolate was offered.

Dandy took tea—in what a little, fragile eggshell of a cup! How different from the massive, yellow bowl from which he used to gulp great draughts of that rare luxury, or something made up to imitate it.

He was afraid to touch this chrysalis for fear he should crush it. He left it on the table before him, and following Longman's given rule, watched to see how other people handled their cups; as a matter of detail, he watched Col. Moseley, who stood, in his estimation, for the most perfect gentleman he knew.

By this precaution he avoided the mistake of pouring his tea into his saucer, which otherwise he would surely have done; for what on earth else were saucers made for anyhow?

Presently came around the boned turkey and the chicken salad.

Dandy chose the salad. But where was the knife with which to shovel the delicious compounds into his capacious mouth? Clearly the waiter had neglected his duty in providing a knife, for there was nothing beside his plate but a silver instrument with four fine prongs. In despair he looked in the direction of his model, the colonel, and saw that gentleman eating with the silver thing, holding it in his right hand. All the others round the table were doing the same thing!

Old Dandy shook his head, saying within himself:

"Sure, and I don't like these newfangled ways; they ain't Irish, nor 'Merican, nor they ain't natural, nuther! But it's a baste I am to be finding fault at Ran's wedding, so it is."

And then Dandy ate his salad as well as he could with his unaccustomed instrument.

The fest went on, and delicacy after delicacy was served. Plates were often changed, dishes were changed. Tea, coffee and chocolate gave place to tokay, champagne and johanisberg.

Dandy, following what he considered a safe rule, but which was soon proved to be anything else but safe, did as he saw other people do, and got through the feast very creditably until at length Col. Moseley arose in his place and called the attention of the company in a neat little speech, which he concluded with:

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, I have the honor to propose the health of the bride and groom."

Up jumped Dandy to do as other people—notably his model colonel did, and exclaimed:

"Me, too, ladies and gintlemin! I purpooose the good health of the bride and groom!"

Consternation fell for a moment on the company, but the colonel had suffered more than one "surprise" in the course of his military life, and he was equal to the occasion.

"Thank you, sir, in the name of our friends," he said gravely, bowing to Dandy. "Then, gentlemen, fill up your glasses."

The toast was honored. And no one felt more satisfied with himself and with all the world than did Dandy Quin.

Other toasts were offered and equally honored, Dandy taking a conspicuous part in every one.

It was twelve o'clock when the guests sat down to the table. It was two when they arose and withdrew to the drawing-room.

Then Judy went upstairs to change her light bridal dress for the heavy green cloth suit that was to defend her from the wintry winds of the open sea.

At her earnest request no one was to go down to the steamer to see them off.

"Because I shall behave badly. I know I shall. I shall cry. And it is so awful to cry in public!" said Judy.

All her effects had been packed and sent on the steamer, except the one little trunk into which her last belongings were to go, and which was to be put into the carriage with her.

So as soon as she was dressed for the departure—cloth suit, fur-lined cloak, beaver poke and all—she came down into the drawing-room, where all her friends were assembled, and there she bade them all good-by. She kissed, embraced and wept over her friends, one after the other; but when she came to Mrs. Moseley she clung to her as if she could never leave her, weeping as if her heart would break.

At last it was that tender lady herself who gently unwound the girl's arms from around her neck, and stooping, whispered:

"Look at Ran, dear. See how distressed he is. He must not see you grieve so!"

Judy hastily wiped her eyes.

Mrs. Moseley beckoned Ran, who came forward and received the girl from the lady's arms.

"Oh, Ran, dear," sobbed Judy, falling into her dialect, "don't ye moind me crying. Sure it's a cowl'd-harrted cray-chur I'd be not to graive, parting with the loikes av her, a rale highborn leddy as has ben sich a mother to me."

"My own dear Judy!" whispered Ran. And that was all he could say.

Mike had taken leave of all his friends and had gone on before. But there were two more whom Judy thought she must bid good-by to.

"Where is Misther Longman and Uncle Dandy?"

"Here we are, Misthress Hay!" answered old Dandy from the hall.

"Oh! I must bid ye good-by, dear frinds!" said Judy, holding out her hand.

"Nivir a bit of it, hinny. Sure we're all in the same boat! That is, the same stamer! We go wid ye across the say! On'y ye's go in the grand first cabin, and we go in the sicond. Our duds went on board this morning, and Mike's gone down to the tovvurn to pay our score. And, sure, he'll join us on the stamer!" said Dandy.

"Oh! I knew Mike was to go with us, but didn't know

you were. I am so glad you are going with us!" exclaimed Judy, drying her last tears.

But Ran was hurrying her into the carriage that was to take them to the steamer. When he had placed her in her seat he returned to speak to the two men.

"Since you are going in the same ship, ride down with us. There are two vacant seats in our carriage," he said.

"Couldn't think of such a thing!" exclaimed Longman, laughing. "What! intrude on a bride and groom! We appreciate your magnanimity and thank you mightily, but we couldn't think of it!"

And though Ran urged his invitation, Longman steadily refused it, much to Dandy's disgust, who would willingly have enjoyed the luxury of a ride in that elegant clarence.

"We will go down in the horse cars and get there before you. You'll find us on deck when you arrive. Come, Dandy!" said Longman, and raising his felt wide-awake, he walked away, carrying off his unwilling little old friend.

Ran entered the carriage and gave the order to the coachman. And they started for the steamer.

A half-hour's drive brought them to the crowded pier, and five minutes' struggle through the confusion transferred them to the deck of the *Boadicea*, where they found Will Walling, Mike, Longman, and Dandy waiting for them.

"No more partings here, dear Judy. Here are meetings!" said Ran with a smile.

An hour later the *Boadicea* sailed.

At that same moment Mrs. Duncan, taking leave of Mrs. Walling, repeated her words:

"Ah! won't there be a circus when Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay confront Gentleman Geff and Miss Leegh at Haymore! How I would like to be there!"

CHAPTER XII

DARKEST BEFORE DAY

STUART took his wife home from the wedding breakfast.

It was four o'clock, and the wintry sun was low on the western horizon.

Mrs. Pole had a good fire burning in the little grate when they entered the parlor.

"See, Poley! I have brought you a piece of the wedding cake to dream on, you know!" said Palma, offering a pretty little box done up in silver paper.

"Ah, my dear! My dreaming days are long past! long past!" sighed the old woman, as, nevertheless, she took the box.

"What a prosaic old foggy you are, Poley, to be sure. For that matter all our dreaming days are over after we are married, I reckon."

"Yes, honey, until we begin to dream for our children."

Palma blushed and sank into sudden silence. She was beginning to dream sweet dreams of motherhood, but that was her own precious secret, she imagined, not suspecting that Mrs. Pole knew as much about it as she did herself, and perhaps more. To cover her confusion she laughed and said:

"Well, Poley, if you do not care to dream on the cake yourself you can give it to some young friends of yours, to one of your many cousins or nieces; they will be glad to have it."

Then she threw off her turban and her wraps, drew off her gloves and sank into an easy-chair before the fire.

"After all, it is good to be quiet at home, is it not, Cleve? I love this little snugger of ours. We can live very happily here until next May, and then flit to the woods and mountains again. I think I like our simple way of life, Cleve, quite as well, if not better, than if you spent all the revenues of your Mississippi plantation in living in the grand style of some of our friends. What do you think, Cleve?" she inquired, stretching out her pretty feet to the grateful warmth of the fire.

He did not answer in words—he could not; he laid his hand tenderly on her curly, black hair and turned slowly away and went out of the room.

Palma received the caress as a full assent to all that she had said, and smiled to herself as she gazed into the fire.

Cleve Stuart went downstairs and out upon the sidewalk, and paced up and down before the house. This was his nightly promenade ground, where he came to smoke his

cigar. But this evening he had no cigar, nor even the wherewithal to get one.

Yes, it had come to this—Cleve Stuart was absolutely penniless. He had paid out his last dime on the horse cars that brought himself and his wife from the wedding breakfast. This was Saturday, the second of December. On Monday, the fourth, their month's rent would be due, and there was not a penny to meet it.

What should he do?

If all his remaining earthly possessions were pawned they would not bring money enough to meet the demand of their landlord.

Nor could he hope for any forbearance from that quarter. The terms of the contract were strict, and amounted, in brief, to this: "Pay or go."

Nor could he bring himself to the shame, not to say the dishonesty, of trying to borrow money which he could foresee no way of paying.

This was the pass to which his marriage with Palma had brought him! Did he regret his marriage?

"No," he said to himself, "though I proposed to her, first of all, under the diabolical influence of the beautiful fiend who had me in her power, and for mercenary purposes that were to serve us, the two conspirators, yet for one redeeming event I do thank Providence—and that is that I discovered Palma to be penniless as well as invalided before I married her. Then I kept faith with her; I married her; I saved her precious life, and I have grown to know her and to love her above all things on earth. And to whatever straits I may be reduced, and however much I may suffer, I will, so far as possible, shield my beloved one from knowing them or sharing them. But in the meantime what in the name of Heaven am I to do? And what is to become of her? Men in such straits as mine have been driven, are daily driven, to commit suicide. We read such cases in almost every paper, and often with the concluding comment: 'No motive could be discovered for the desperate deed.' I suppose, now, if I were to be so lost to a sense of justice as to end my trouble with a shot to-night, it would be said to-morrow: 'He had just come from a wedding breakfast, where he appeared among the happiest of the guests. No motive can be surmised for his desperate deed.'

As if men paraded their perplexities to all and sundry, in season and out of season, and wore their motives and intentions pinned on their sleeves—especially such motives and intentions. Pah! nothing could drive me to such a deed. I must live and brave my fate, trusting in Heaven, doing my duty! But all the same, sweet little Palma, if it were Heaven's will, I think it would be well if you and I should fall asleep to-night and never awake again in this world!"

So deep, so painful, so absorbing was his reverie that he did not perceive the approach of the postman, who ran against him in the dark, begged his pardon and passed on until he reached the main entrance of the apartment house, went in, came out, and hurried on again out of sight up the street.

Stuart had scarcely noticed him, beyond muttering, "Not at all," when the other had said, "Beg pardon, sir." And now he thought no more of the incident, but continued his walk for an hour, as if by wearying his body he might relieve his mind.

Presently, thinking that this was their dinner hour, though he had little appetite for dinner just now, he turned and entered the hall. He did not ring up the elevator, but he walked heavily up the five flights of stairs. It was a mental relief to fatigue himself to faintness.

He entered the little parlor and found, not dinner, but the tea table spread.

Palma was sitting behind the urn and waiting for him. The fire was very bright, the parlor very snug, and the little wife very happy. If this could only continue!

"I thought, after a wedding feast at two o'clock, that tea would be better than dinner at six. So I told Poley. Do you mind, Cleve?" inquired Palma.

"No, dear; indeed, I prefer tea; it will be more refreshing," he replied, trying to overcome the heaviness of his soul so that it should not appear in his look or tone.

"And Poley has made some of her delicious, light, puffy muffins. I never saw any so nice anywhere as she can make. I tell you, Cleve, dear, if our riches should suddenly 'take unto themselves wings and fly away,' Poley and I would open a bake shop with a specialty of these tea muffins. Poley should make them. I would stand behind the counter and sell them and you should keep the accounts, and we

should all three make our fortunes and divide the profits," said Palma as she poured out the delicate Japan tea.

Stuart smiled as he took a cup from her hand.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. There's a letter for you! It came while you were out. I put it on the corner of the mantelpiece. Will you look at it now?"

"No, dear; I know what it is. It is only the bill for the month's rent. The landlord always sends it on the third of the month, and as the third comes on Sunday this time, he has sent it on Saturday, a day earlier."

"Try a muffin, Cleve. You don't know how nice they are."

He took one to please her.

Then she chatted on about the wedding they had just attended, and the young pair who had just sailed for Europe.

"They are so anxious that we shall go and visit them at Haymore as soon as they shall be settled there, Cleve. And, indeed, I did promise to use all my influence with you to persuade you to take me over next summer. Why, Cleve, it would be ever so much pleasanter than to go to Lull's again, even! And yet I used to think Lull's was just Paradise! What do you think, Cleve?"

"I think, my dear one, that it would be very delightful to spend the summer with our friends at Haymore. As much as I have traveled, I have never been in Yorkshire."

"Then you think we may go?" eagerly demanded Palma.

"Providence permitting, yes, my dear," he replied.

She perceived no evasion in this answer. Indeed, the phrase was her own habitual formula whenever she fully intended to do any certain thing, "Providence permitting." She took his words for consent and answered gleefully:

"That will be something to look forward to during the winter."

Stuart smiled. Ah! how hard to keep up that cheerful countenance and light tone when his heart was so heavy and his mind so dark.

They lingered long at the tea table, because Palma was full of life and of the enjoyment of all life's blessings, in possession and in anticipation.

When they arose at last and the table was cleared of the tea service, and the books and magazines replaced on it,

Palma took her workbasket and Cleve a book, and she sewed at mending gloves, he read aloud "The Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood."

The letter on the mantelpiece, confidently believed to be the rent bill, was not looked at, or even thought of. There it lay, and was fated to lay, until Monday morning.

The young pair retired at their usual hour; but only Palma slept. The vulture of anxiety, gnawing at his heart, kept Stuart wide awake.

Sunday dawned clear, bright and beautiful.

The young couple arose and breakfasted and went to church.

They walked all the way, not because Cleve had not a dime to pay car fare—though he had not—but because Palma never wished to tax the horses on the Sabbath day except in cases of absolute necessity.

"Because," she urged, "the merciful command of the Lord provides for the rest of the beast as well as of the man, and these horses work hard enough all the week to rest on Sunday."

And Stuart had always yielded to her scruples in this respect.

The organ was pealing forth a fine voluntary when they entered the church and took their seats. The music ceased and the service began. Palma entered into it with all the loving devotion of her heart and soul. Cleve could not concentrate his thoughts on worship, though he tried to do so.

After a little while, in due course, the first hymn was given out, and the first line fell like a trumpet blast, calling the Christian soul to hope and courage:

"Give to the winds thy fears!

Hope and be undismayed!

God hears thy sighs and sees thy tears,

God shall lift up thy head."

The words thrilled him, aroused him; all the black shadows of grief, shame, despair and desperation, which had bowed and cowed his spirit with the sense of helplessness and humiliation, rolled away as before a rising sun. It seemed wonderful, miraculous, a memory of divine intervention that never left him in all his after life. He had

always worshiped God as the supreme ruler of the universe; but never had known Him as the Heavenly Father. But from this hour he knew, or rather he felt, that "the God of the universe, the God of the race, was the God of the individual man," the giver of life, the giver of heaven, the giver of the daily bread as well.

The sermon which followed was from the text: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. . . . Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

The sermon that followed was almost worthy of the text, not quite, for no man's nor angel's words can add to the Word of the Lord; but it was faithfully, lovingly and practically applied, and it did good service.

At the end of the worship Stuart, as well as Palma, came out into the sunlight refreshed and comforted.

That morning Stuart, in his dark mood, had shrunk from the exertion of going to church. What would be the use? he had thought in his secret heart; and he had tried to excuse himself to Palma, but she, from a feeling of duty, had persuaded him to go.

Now as they walked uptown through the sunny air he said:

"I am very glad we went to church to-day, dear."

"So am I. We got our daily bread, our heavenly manna there, did we not?"

"Yes."

They reached home and found their pleasant little parlor aglow with the bright fire in the grate, and inviting with the neatly spread table and the simple midday meal of the Sabbath.

Mrs. Pole had also been to church at a much nearer point, and had got home before them in good time to lay the cloth.

Dinner over, they spent the afternoon in reading.

They had an early tea, and then went out to church for the evening service, walking there and back again. They reached home after ten o'clock, for the way was long. They were revived in spirit and wholesomely fatigued in body, so that they soon retired to rest and slept well. Even Stuart slept, though he believed that this night ended their last day in their pretty home, and that the next morning would send them adrift, bereft of all their effects, except the

clothes they wore, and Heaven only knew whither! But—they would be in their Father's world! No one could turn them out of that. So they slept in peace.

I have been particular in describing these last two days of Stuart's and Palma's experience, for they were ever after memorable in their lives.

On Monday morning they arose early, as usual. It had been Stuart's daily custom to go out after breakfast in search of employment. He had continued this under all discouragements.

Yet this morning he stayed at home to see the landlord's collector, who always arrived the day after the bill had come by mail. As the bill had arrived on Saturday, and the collector could not come on Sunday, he would certainly put in an appearance on Monday, and Palma must not be left alone to receive him—under the circumstances.

Palma took her knitting—a pair of mittens for Mrs. Pole—and sat down to work near the window, from which she could look below upon the housetops and above to the glorious December sky.

Stuart took a book and threw himself into a rocking-chair by the table, but he did not read. He was waiting—for what? He did not know.

The door opened and "the boy" came in, silently laid a letter on the table, and went out again.

Stuart took it up and opened it. Palma looked up from her work.

"Why—this is the rent bill. I thought it came Saturday. Where is that letter that came?" Stuart inquired.

"On the corner of the mantelpiece. I'll get it for you," said Palma; and she arose and handed him the letter.

He took it and gazed at it.

"I don't know the handwriting at all," he said meditatively, "and it is postmarked 'Wolfswalk, West Virginia.' I should think it was intended for some one else, if my name was not such an uncommon one, and certainly there is no one else in this house that bears it." And he turned it over and over and scrutinized it after the strange manner of people who receive a mysterious letter and play with their own curiosity by delaying to open it. At length he broke the envelope and unfolded the letter.

First of all he turned to the signature, which was at the

bottom of the fourth page, so that he did not happen to open the sheet and find what lay between the leaves.

"John Cleve!" he exclaimed. "Why, dear Palma, this is from my old bachelor great-uncle, who, I thought, had been gathered to his fathers ages ago. He must be at least eighty years old."

"Oh, Cleve, read it to me! I never knew you had an uncle," said Palma, dropping her work and coming and leaning over the back of his chair so that she could look at the open letter.

Cleve read as follows:

"WOLFSWALK, WEST VIRGINIA,

"November 25, 186—.

"MY DEAR GRAND-NEPHEW: You will be surprised to get a letter from me, of whom you can have but little memory, as you have not seen me since you were a babe of three years old, when your dear mother—my dear and only niece—brought you to my house.

"Since her lamented death, in Mississippi, I had completely lost sight of you, thinking of you as in the hands of competent guardians during your minority, and of leading a prosperous life as an active planter on your estate since your majority. I thought of writing to you, but neglected to do so. How families do get separated in this world, to be sure, neglecting each other, forgetting each other, like aliens!

"Several circumstances have occurred to bring you forcibly to my mind of late. First, the fact that my two grand-nephews, Frank and James, sole descendants of my only nephew, Charles, fell on the field of Cold Harbor, fighting for their native State. They died unmarried. This leaves you my sole heir.

"As soon as I learned this fact I wrote to you in Mississippi, but failed to get a letter from you. I wrote to the postmaster of your post office there, and learned from him that you had been an absentee from home for many years.

"Then I thought of advertising for you, but so hated the plan that I delayed putting it in execution.

"At length chance favored me and gave the information I desired. A neighbor of mine went off on a business trip and was in Washington City last week, and met there a friend

of yours—a Mr. Walling, of New York. By the merest accident your name came up—neither of the gentlemen knowing of how much importance it was to me—and Fairfax heard that you were in New York City, and, in fact, much about you which it is not necessary to repeat here, but all of which he told me. Therefore, I write you this letter.

“And now, since you are not bound down to your Mississippi plantation, and since you are my sole heir, and I am old and feeble, and cannot last long, I ask you to be a good boy, and a dutiful nephew, and to come and bring your wife and live with me on the farm.

“I have not suffered, as so many have, by the war. It did not sweep over my land, but gave it a rather wide berth.

“My negroes have remained with me at fair wages, but whether they do fair work is something else.

“I have an overseer to look after the negroes, but, my boy, I require some one to look after the overseer. Will you come?

“As breaking up and traveling is always expensive, and as I do not know your financial condition, I inclose a check for five hundred dollars, merely as an advance to my heir. Give my love to your wife. Let me hear from you as soon as possible, and believe me, my dear Cleve, now and ever, your affectionate grand-uncle,

“JOHN CLEVE.”

“Thank God!” fervently ejaculated Stuart.

“But where is the check?” curiously inquired Palma.

Stuart opened the leaves of the letter again, then his face fell and he murmured:

“My uncle must have forgotten to put it in!”

“No,” said Palma, “here it is!” And she picked it up from the carpet, to which it had slipped.

“Thank God!” said Stuart again.

“Why, I am glad, very glad, that you have heard from your uncle. But you, Cleve! I have never in all my life seen you so strongly moved. What is it all about?” exclaimed Palma, amazed at his extreme agitation.

“My darling, when this providential letter came we were on the brink of ruin!” he answered, telling her the truth at last.

“‘Ruin!’ You! Cleve Stuart!”

"Yes, my beloved."

"But your vast wealth?"

"A fond imagination of yours."

"And your rich Mississippi plantation?"

"A blasted wilderness."

"Oh, Cleve! Cleve! How have we lived?"

"By the gradual disposal of all my useless effects."

"Oh, Cleve! Cleve!"

"The last dime was spent on Saturday, dear, and this morning I looked for nothing else but a distraint for rent and ejection from these premises."

"And you never told me! You never told me!"

"Why should I have distressed you, dear one?"

"Oh, I could have worked, Cleve. But I didn't know! I didn't know! I thought you were rich. And I thought, sometimes, that you were too prudent, too saving, especially when you did not get a dress coat to go to Ran's wedding. And all the time you were poor, and struggling on the very brink of ruin! Oh, Cleve!"

"Never mind, dear heart, we are ready for the landlord, or for any other demand. Tell me, darling, shall you like to go to this mountain farmhouse in West Virginia, and keep house for the old man, and be mistress, doctress, teacher and everything, to his horde of darkies?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes—a thousand times, yes! I shall be delighted, Cleve!"

"Very well, then. As it all depended upon you, I will answer the old man's letter and accept his offer; then go out and change this check."

"No, no; first of all, dear Cleve," said Palma, gravely, "let us kneel and return thanks to our Heavenly Father that we are saved."

CHAPTER XII

SAFE AT HOME

WE left Jennie Montgomery sleeping in her mother's arms, with her babe safe beside them.

Jennie would have talked all night till broad daylight;

but her mother, knowing how tired the young traveler must be, discouraged all conversation by pretending to be sleepy, by replying only in monosyllables, or even answering at random, until at length the talker herself gave up in despair, grew tired, then stupid, and then fell fast asleep.

The consequence of her exhausted strength and her long vigil was that she slept long and deeply and late into the next morning.

When at last she awoke she found herself alone in the room, with the morning sunlight stealing through the slats of the window shutters, and gilding bright lines on the white window curtains and on the light gray ground of the carpet and the light gray color of the walls. She saw all this through the festooned white curtains at the foot of her bed. She raised herself up, and then she saw something through the same opening—a bright little coal fire burning in the grate.

Her mother was gone and her baby was gone. Evidently Jennie had slept so soundly that she had not heard their uprising and departure, and she had continued to sleep on until she knew not what hour of the day.

She thought she would get up and dress herself quietly before any one should discover that she was awake.

She slipped out of bed, and the first thing that she saw was her large sea trunk, that had been packed with undiscovered treasure of clothing by the benevolent women who had taken such a warm interest in her welfare, and who had given her an outfit as well as a first-class passage home.

The key of her trunk was in her *portemonnaie*, in the pocket of her traveling dress. She got it out, unstrapped and unlocked the treasure chest, and lifted the lid.

But just then she heard the voice of her baby crowing loudly in response to another cooing voice that she recognized as her mother's.

They were having a grand circus together in the parlor, that young grandmother and the baby.

Jennie snatched up the first garment fitting to wear from the top of the trunk, and then dropped the lid and hastily washed and dressed herself, putting on a pretty blue cashmere princess wrapper, trimmed with blue satin ribbons. Then, while still buttoning up, she hastily opened the dividing door and entered the parlor.

Her mother was there, sitting in a low rocker, holding the baby across her lap. Beside her, on the hob of the grate, stood the bowl of "infant food" from which she had been feeding the child.

There was no one else in the room, nor did there need to be to make it very lively there, for the baby was crowing with all the strength of her lungs, while laughing up in the pretty, smiling face, with the cooing voice, bending over her.

"Oh, mamma, darling! why didn't you wake me?" exclaimed Jennie, coming up before Mrs. Campbell perceived her presence in the room.

"Why, Jennie! Up and dressed, my pet? Why didn't you ring for some one to help you?" inquired the mother in her turn.

"You haven't answered my question yet, and told me why you did not wake me when you got up and dressed baby," said Jennie as she stooped and kissed her mother and the child.

"I was so well satisfied to see you sleeping off your fatigue that I would not have disturbed you for a great deal," said Mrs. Campbell, returning her daughter's caress.

"Well, now, the reason I didn't ring for any one was because I didn't want any one. And when I heard you and baby in such earnest conversation, I hurried with my dressing and came in. I thought baby would be hungry."

"She was hungry; but I sent to the chemist and got this 'infant food' for her."

"Oh! she never was fed with that before!" exclaimed Jennie, in some doubt of its good effects.

"Don't be afraid, my dear. It is used in all the royal nurseries. See, the royal arms are on the label," said the lady.

"Of course, mamma, darling, if you give it, it is all right. I think your judgment quite as good as that of all the royal family put together."

"Tut! tut! my pet! Your visit to America must have turned you into a republican. But what a lovely wrapper you have got on, Jennie!" she said, perhaps to turn the conversation.

"Is it not? And I have got another one just like it in mauve, which has never been on my back, and which you

must have, dear mamma. Those angel women in New York have given me that huge trunk full of beautiful clothing, and I shall never wear one-half of it out, but my greatest pleasure in it will be to divide it with you, my dear, darling, beautiful mamma."

"Oh, Jennie!" was all the curate's wife found to say to that, for she did not mean to take any of her daughter's pretty clothes, if she could help it, nor did she want to vex the girl by refusing them just then.

"Where is papa?" inquired Jennie.

"Gone out to make some sick calls; he will be home by noon. But here I am chatting away and forgetting that you have had no breakfast. We breakfasted two hours ago!" laughed Mrs. Campbell as she put her hand out to the bell rope and rang.

Elspeth Longman came in, smiled and nodded.

"Good-morning, ma'am," to Jennie, and then went to work to lay the cloth for her breakfast. It was soon spread upon the table—good coffee, rich cream, muffins, fresh butter, grilled ham and poached eggs.

Mrs. Campbell gave the baby to Elspeth and sat down to pour out the coffee for her prodigal daughter.

"Ah, mamma! You remember our old feeling, yours and mine, that a draught poured out by beloved hands has the power of life-giving to the spirit as well as to the body," said Jennie as she received the cup from her mother.

"And the same may be said of work gifts, my dear. Your little Shetland veil that you knit for me years ago, always seemed full as it could hold of your dear love, and its touch on my face like your caress," replied Mrs. Campbell.

While they sat at table Elspeth Longman stood at one of the windows with the baby in her arms, tapping on the panes to make the child look out on the blue sky and the evergreen trees.

"I shall stop calling baby 'Baby' now, mamma. She is going to be named after you—Esther. It is too grown up a name to call a little baby in common. And we can't call her Hetty, because that is your pet name. Now what shall we call her for short?"

"Essy," replied the young grandmother.

"Essy, then, it shall be. Mind, Mrs. Longman. Our

baby is to the christened Esther, after mamma, and we are to call her Essy for short."

"Very well, ma'am; it is a pretty name," said the woman at the window.

"And we will have her christened on Sunday, mamma. We must wait for Sunday, because I remember papa's preference for christening babies on Sunday, unless there should be some pressing necessity to perform the ceremony on a week day."

"There's grandpa!" exclaimed Elspeth to the baby, tapping on the window. And the next instant, the Rev. James Campbell—otherwise familiarly and affectionately in his own family called "Jimmy"—entered the house and walked into the room.

He kissed his daughter good-morning, and then took his stand on the rug, with his back to the fire, looking so grave that his wife grew anxious, but forbore to question him in the presence of their newly returned daughter.

"And perhaps, after all," she reflected, "it is nothing very personal. He may have just returned from the death-bed of a parishioner. Such scenes always affect him, more for the sake of those left behind than for the departed, for he has too much faith to fret after the freed soul."

While Mrs. Campbell was turning these thoughts over in her mind, and Mr. Campbell was standing in silence on the rug, Jennie finished her breakfast and arose and took her crowing baby from the arms of Elspeth, that the latter might clear off the table.

When this was done, and the woman had left the room, and Jennie had put her baby to sleep in the pretty berceau-nette that had been provided by her mother that very morning, and the father, mother and daughter were seated around the fire, both these women with needlework in their hands, the curate said:

"Now, my dear, if you will, you may give us the explanation you promised. Hetty!" he said, suddenly turning to his wife, "did she tell you anything last night?"

"Not a word. I would not let her talk. I made her go to sleep."

"That was right. Well, we know from her letter that she, daughter of a minister of the church of England, though a very humble one, and the wife of an ex-officer in

her majesty's service, though a most unworthy one—that she, a lady by birth and by marriage, was brought to such extremity as to be confined in the pauper ward of a public hospital, and to depend on private charity for her outfit and passage home to us.”

“Thanks be to the Lord that we have her and her child safe and sound in mind and body, however they came to us!” fervently exclaimed Hetty Campbell.

“I say we know all this from our child's letter. But we do not know why all this should have happened in this way; nor why she never mentioned her husband's name in her letter; nor why she comes to us with her child alone; nor why, when I asked her for an explanation, she replied to me that the kindest act he ever did for her was—to leave her.”

“Oh, my Jennie! Oh, my dear Jennie!” exclaimed Hetty in a tone of pain.

“Yes, mamma; it is true. The kindest thing he ever did for me was to leave me. I am not heartbroken over it. I have nothing, not the least thing, to reproach myself with in all my conduct toward him. Mamma, when I made Capt. Kightly Montgomery's acquaintance I

“‘Foregathered wi' the de'il.’”

“Oh, Jennie—my daughter!”

“This is hard fact, mamma, as you will know when you have heard the story I am going to tell you. Is there any danger of any one coming in?”

“No, dear. There is no one in the house besides ourselves except Elspeth, and as this is baking day she is very busy in the kitchen, and will not come in here unless she should be called,” said Hetty. Nevertheless, she got up and turned the keys in both doors.

“Now, then, my dear,” she said as she resumed her seat.

“It is a long story, and a painful one; yet, for every reason, I feel that I must tell you the whole of it without reservation, because I shall have to seek your counsel and be guided by it as to my future course,” said Jennie, turning to her father.

“Yes; tell every word you know,” replied Jimmy.

Then Jennie told the whole horrible story—of her secret

marriage—of which her parents had heard before—of the many devices by which her husband had kept her away from her parents, even after they had received her penitent letter, and forgiven her, and invited her and her bridegroom to visit them; of their wanderings through Europe, stopping at the great gambling centers; of his abandonment of her; or her pursuit of him over land and sea; of their meeting at night in the streets of New York, just when he was on the eve of marriage with another woman; of his fright at her appearance, his instant repudiation of her, and their bitter altercation, which ended in his stabbing her and leaving her for dead on the sidewalk of the deserted street,

“In the dead waste and middle of the night.”

At this point of the story Mrs. Campbell screamed and flung her hands up to her eyes as if to shut out the horrible vision her imagination had conjured up from the words of Jennie.

Then there followed a pause in the narrative until Hetty had recovered herself. Meanwhile the curate sat in grim silence, like a man who resolves but does not mean to speak.

It was Jennie who broke the spell.

“That is the very worst, mamma. I have nothing to tell worse than this—no, nor half as bad—and you see that it did not kill me. And now what I have to tell you is mostly a pleasant experience; for when I recovered consciousness, which was after many hours, I found myself on a nice, white bed in a pleasant room, with the sweetest, kindest woman’s face, like an angel’s face, bending over me, and my new-born baby lying beside me. Yes; my wound had been in the flesh of my left breast, shocking me into a swoon, but not fatal—as he had supposed it to be—and not even dangerous. Under some anæsthetic—I suppose, though I do not know—my wound had been dressed, and my baby born, and I awoke in such a heaven of peace and good-will, with my precious baby by my side, and with angels of mercy all about me, that, mamma, every vestige of anger against my husband for all his wrongs to me vanished from my bosom; although there remained a shrinking from the thought of ever meeting him again, and a horror of him that I feel can never be overcome in this life. As soon as I was well enough

to bear the ordeal I was questioned as to my assailant; but I would not tell who he was. The police searched my room on Vevay Street, and found his miniature; but it happened to be the one which had been taken when he was in the army, in his regimental uniform, and with his military mustache, and it bore his monogram, K. M. They brought it to me, but I would have nothing to say to it; nor was it available to trace Montgomery, for he now wore a citizen's dress, had grown a full, long beard, and he bore another name—a name supported by documentary and direct evidence—a name which it will surprise you to hear—but let that pass for the present.”

“Why not tell us now?”

“Wait, mamma, dear. I am following the narrative as the facts came to my knowledge. The miniature was photographed and distributed to aid in the identification and arrest of the suspected party. It did not lead to Montgomery's arrest, but to that of an unlucky gentleman who bore some resemblance to the photograph, especially in the matter of the martial mustache. This hapless person was brought before me for identification. The likeness struck even me at first, and startled me into a compromising exclamation; but a second glance assured me that I had never seen the man before in my life; and I told them so. They did not believe me. And afterward it took the evidence of several substantial citizens to convince the magistrate before whom he was brought that the accused man was quite a distinct individual from Capt. Kightly Montgomery, my supposed assailant. I say my supposed assailant, dear mamma; for they could not know him for such, since I would not give him up to justice; for I wish him no harm, though I never want to see him in this world.”

“Never!” breathed Hetty with all a mother's intense sympathy.

“I told you in my letter of the great goodness of those angel women in New York to me, and how, as soon as I was able to leave the hospital, one of them, dear Mrs. Duncan, took me home to her own house, where she cared for me and my baby as—as you do, sweet mamma.”

“God bless them!” exclaimed Hetty.

“I stayed with her while the ladies were preparing my outfit, and until I took passage on the *Scorpio*.”

"And you saw no more of that——"

The conscientious minister hesitated at a word that any other man, under the circumstances, would have pronounced with vim.

Jennie understood him, and answered promptly.

"No, dear papa. I saw no more of him until I was eight days out at sea. Then we came face to face on deck."

"Face to face on deck!" exclaimed Hetty in dismay.

"Face to face on deck!" Then he was actually coming over on the same ship with yourself?" said the curate, losing much of his self-control.

"Yes, papa. Yes, mamma. He was coming over on the same ship with myself. Coming over under his new name, with his new, deceived bride. They had been married with the greatest *éclat* in one of the most wealthy and fashionable houses in New York. And they were on their wedding tour."

Then Jennie gave a detailed account of the meeting between the recreant husband and the wronged wife on board the *Scorpio*. She described his fright, awe, horror on meeting one whom he believed to be in a pauper's grave in potter's field, with the stigma of suicide on her name, and then his slow acceptance of the fact that it was herself in the body, and not an optical illusion created by *delirium tremens*, that was there before him.

"I had not dreamed of meeting him there, or anywhere else on earth," said Jennie; "but when I saw him before me, so unexpectedly, I was calmer than he was. I bade him leave me and avoid me, and told him that I should not trouble him while we were, unfortunately, on the ship together, but that I should tell you my whole story and take your advice as to my future course."

"You did wisely so far," said the curate.

"Then I told him you were to meet me at Liverpool."

"Well?"

"He had taken tickets for Liverpool, but he got off, with his party, at Queenstown."

"Ah!" breathed the curate, "that was prudently done. But now, my child, tell me the alias under which this man is now traveling, and which you said would surprise us very much?"

"Dear papa, first of all, will you please to tell me how

much you learned of Kightly Montgomery's true history when you undertook to investigate the antecedents of the young officer who had run off with your daughter?"

"Yes, my dear. There was no mystery about him. I went to the colonel of his regiment, and learned that he was the son of the late General the Honorable Arthur Montgomery, who was so distinguished in the Indian war, the grandson of the late and the nephew of the present Earl of Engelmeed, and a disgrace to his ancestry and relatives; and that he had held a commission in the —— Regiment of Foot, but had been court-martialed and dismissed the service for 'conduct unworthy of an officer and a gentleman.'"

"And you are sure that he is really Kightly Montgomery—that that is his real name?"

"As sure as that James Campbell is my own," said the curate. "And now, will you tell me what name he passed under in America, and why he dropped his own?"

"Yes, papa; the name under which he passed in New York; the name under which he claims the richest estate in Yorkshire; the name under which he married Miss Lamia Leegh, of New York; the name under which he sailed in the *Scorpio* for Liverpool, is——"

"Yes? Well?"

"Mr. Randolph Hay, of Haymore!"

"Great Heaven, Jennie!"

"Good Lord, Jennie!"

These exclamations burst simultaneously from the lips of Jimmy and Hetty.

"Yes, mamma! Yes, papa! It is true as truth. Your landlord and patron, the new Squire of Haymore, for whose home-coming with his bride all these gorgeous preparations have been made, is no other than my husband, your son-in-law, ex-captain of Foot, Kightly Montgomery, who metaphorically fled from before your face by landing at Queens-town, to avoid meeting you at Liverpool."

"Oh, Hetty! Hetty!" said the curate, appealing to his wife, "what is this world coming to?"

"To judgment one of these days, Jimmy, according to your own preaching! 'Reck your own read,' Jimmy. And take comfort, as I do, that whatever has been, or is, or is to be, we have our darling daughter and her babe safe at

home!" said Hetty, closing her arm around Jennie's waist and squeezing her fondly.

"And what a complication! The scoundrel—Heaven forgive me, the word slipped out!—the man slunk off the steamer at Queenstown for fear of meeting me at Liverpool, and now he is walking unaware into my very arms!"

"And I don't believe that your arms will fold him in a very fond embrace!" exclaimed Hetty.

"If they had but the strength I fear it would be in the grizzly bear's hug, or the boa constrictor's crush!" exclaimed the curate, gasping.

"But the mad audacity of his coming here, where you are! I don't understand it," said Hetty.

"My dear, he does not dream that I am here! How should he? He thinks that we are all at Medge, on the south coast, with the length of England between us and Haymore!"

"So! I forgot that! What shall you do, Jimmy?"

"Nothing at present; but wait for his coming; then I will confront him and expose him to the lady he has deceived and feloniously married. Meanwhile, Hetty and Jennie, my dears, breathe not a word of this secret to any one, whoever he or she may be. The effrontery of the man in calling himself Randolph Hay, and claiming the Haymore estates, is nothing less than insanity! And the credulity of lawyers in allowing his claim is past belief!"

"Oh, but, my dear father, he had piles and piles of documents, and no end of direct testimony besides! I heard all about Mr. Randolph Hay's appearance and claim to the Haymore estates, and his engagement to Miss Leegh from Mrs. Duncan, before I ever discovered that the claimant and bridegroom-elect were identical with my own recreant husband."

"Forged or stolen documents, Jennie. And suborned and perjured witnesses! That is the story of his claim, Jennie. But breathe not a word to any one of this affair! Let the tenants and the villagers go on with their preparations for a grand fête. Let Capt. Kightly Montgomery and his bride come on in triumph to enjoy it! The higher the flight the heavier the fall for him."

"But the poor lady! She was one of those who helped me, papa."

"I am sorry for her! But, even for her sake, the man should be exposed and punished. She must not live with him in sin!" said the curate. Then, after a pause, "I cannot comprehend how he dares to come to England! One would think that he would be afraid of being recognized. It is true that he believes this family to be on the south coast. True, also, that he knows the regiment to which he lately belonged to be in India, so that there is no danger of his meeting with any of his late fellow officers, but still it is always possible that he may be recognized and exposed."

"Oh, papa, you do not know what a change the full beard, and a difference in the parting of his hair, has made in him," said Jennie.

"And, besides, did we not hear that the new squire does not intend to reside in England for some years to come? Did not some one say that he was only coming here to make a sort of triumphal entry upon his paternal land, and then, after liberally treating all his tenants and the villagers, he was to leave on extended travels?"

"Oh, yes! yes! I believe we did hear something of the sort. I suppose the fellow thinks he can safely come here with his bride to gratify his pride and vanity, by exhibiting her and himself in a triumphal entry, after the manner of royal personages! I dare say he thinks himself secure in doing that. But he does not know the Nemesis that is waiting for him! He does not dream that he will exchange triumph for shame, luxury for torture, and Haymore Hall and fox-hunting for Portsmouth Isle and penal servitude!" exclaimed the curate.

Then rising, he said:

"I must go and write my sermon. And this has given me some new ideas for it."

And when he left the room Hetty and Jennie both knew that the sermon in question would be likely to deal more with the terrors of the law than with the mercies of the Lord.

CHAPTER XIV.

COMING EVENTS.

THE autumn days passed calmly at the parsonage of Haymore. The curate had his own care, but he kept it to him-

self. On that morning succeeding Jennie's arrival, when Hetty had observed traces of unusual disturbance on the brow of her Jimmy and had ascribed it to the effect of some distressing deathbed scene of some parishoner and therefore had forborne to question him, the cause of the curate's uneasiness was just this: He had, by that morning's mail, received a letter from his rector at Cannes, speaking hopelessly of his own illness and predicting an early and fatal issue.

James Campbell would not disturb his wife and daughter with this news, though it troubled him deeply and for more reasons than one.

In the first place, he felt a warm affection for the venerable rector who had been his father's classmate at Oxford, and who had remembered him when he could do him a service and put him into his present position.

In the second place, should the rector die soon, his successor would be appointed by the Squire of Haymore and would naturally dismiss him, James Campbell, from his curacy. And he and his family would have to go forth in the world, homeless, moneyless and almost friendless, in midwinter. What prospect lay before the three but destitution and indebtedness—practically, first, to go into the cheapest lodgings they could find; then to go into debt for their daily food as long as he might be able to get credit.

And after that—what?

He did not know.

Of course, he would try to get work again—another curacy, or a tutorship, or a secretaryship. But Jimmy knew by all his past experience and observation how difficult, how almost impossible it was for a man in his position, once out of employment, ever to get in again. If he could only know who was to be the successor of his dying rector, he might, at a proper time, try to gain his favor to be made his curate.

Well—he thought—"while he preacheth to others he must not himself be a castaway." As Hetty had told him, he must "reck his own read." He must do the best he could and leave the result to divine Providence. If he could only hold his present position. What a commodious house he had for his dear ones! What an affluent garden! What a spacious glebe! What a lovely home, taken altogether! What a paradisal one for his family! If he could only re-

tain it by any amount of work—by doing double duty, tenfold duty in the parish! He would not shrink from any labor, any hardship, to retain this refuge for his beloved ones, he thought. Then his conscience reproached him—he was thinking too much of his own, too little of his parish; and besides, the idea of remaining in this sweet home was but a dream, for if even the successor of his dying rector should favor him so far as to retain him in the curacy, he could not continue to reside in the rectory—where, of course, the new rector would take up his abode—but would have to find a small house in the village suitable to his small salary as a curate. But even this last favor was highly improbable. The new rector would have some young clerical friend whom he would take as his curate. They always did, he remembered.

“Is there much sickness or suffering in the parish, Jimmy?” Hetty asked one day when they happened to be alone in the parlor together, Jennie being in her bedroom with her baby, and Elspeth in the kitchen over her cooking.

“Sickness? Why, no! Why do you ask?” inquired the curate.

“Is there any distress, then?”

“Why, no! They are all unusually well just now, and very hilarious over the prospect of the arrival of their new squire and his bride and all the high jinks of their reception. Why did you ask such questions, Hetty?”

“Because, Jimmy, you always look as solemn as a hearse!”

“Do I? Well, in view of coming events, I cannot be expected to look very merry, can I, Hetty?” he inquired, rather evasively.

“You refer to the expected arrival of the fraudulent claimant and bigamous husband, and your duty to strike him down,

“‘Even in his pitch of pride.’

But I don’t see why that should make you look so solemn. And Jennie home, too! And the dear baby! Oh, Jimmy, if you cannot appreciate the blessings around you and be grateful and happy in the midst of them, the Lord help you! though He certainly has a discouraging job of you, just now!”

"I preach to my people and weary them, no doubt. You preach to me and—avenge them!" laughed the Reverend James.

"Well, I am glad to see you laugh, even if it is at my expense," said Hetty.

"What are you two quarreling about?" inquired Jennie, who had put her baby to sleep and now entered the parlor.

"As to which is the best preacher, your mother of myself," answered the curate.

"Oh, mamma! out and out! I have often wished I could hear her in the pulpit!" laughed Jennie.

"That settles it! Hetty, you have gained the point!" said the Rev. James, as he strolled out of the parlor into his study.

His wife's words had not been without their effect. He was just now surrounded with such bright blessings, living in such an atmosphere of love, peace, health, comfort, and happiness that nothing could be added to their blessedness; yet their very perfection troubled him, lest they should not be permanent. He could not enjoy this blessed time, because next month or next year might bring a change which might be for the worse.

Why, what base thanklessness and faithlessness was this! While he "preached to others" he was himself "a cast-away."

But he resolved that he would reform all this. He would take no anxious care for the future. He would do the best he could and leave the rest to the Lord.

From that day he presented a more cheerful aspect to his family.

The leading parishioners began to call on his daughter.

Partly from hearsay and partly from inference, they had got a mixed opinion about the status of the young woman. She was the wife—so they had heard—of one Capt. Kightly Montgomery, son of the late General the Honorable Arthur Montgomery, and grandson of the late and nephew of the present Earl of Engelwing; that the captain was now, of course, with his regiment in India, and that his young wife had come home with her infant on a long visit to her father, because the climate of India was so fatal to young children of European parentage.

Under these mingled impressions of truth and error they called to pay their respects to their pastor's daughter.

From the village there came Mrs. and the Misses Leach, the doctor's wife and daughters; Mrs. Drum, the lawyer's mother, and the Misses Lesmore, the draper's sisters, and several widows and maidens living on their annuities. From the country came Lady Nutt, of Nuttwood, the widow of a civil engineer who had been knighted for some special merit by the queen; the three Misses Frobisher, "ladies of a certain age," co-heiresses of Frobisher Frowns, a queer and gloomy mansion on the moor, which stood against a bank crowned with dark evergreen trees that bent over the roof of the house, like towering brows on a human face—thence I suppose the quaint if not forbidding name.

These were all. Others of the county gentry belonging to that neighborhood were absentees.

Jennie as well as her mother was much pleased with the hearty, homely, cordial manners of these Yorkshire country people. But the better she liked the more she dreading them!

"Oh, mamma!" she said, "I fear they cannot know my real position here! They cannot know that I am a forsaken wife! Why, yesterday old Lady Nutt patted my head and said:

"I can feel for you, my dear. I had a niece in the H. E. I. C.'s service, and she had to come home with her young children and leave them here with their grandmother while she went back to him. Do you intend to stay here with your child, or leave it here with your parents and join the captain in India?"

"Yes, mamma, in all innocence the dear old lady asked me that question! And my cheeks burned like fire as I answered her the truth and said, 'I intend to stay here with my baby, my lady.' She said, 'That is right,' and kissed me and went away before you came in."

"She is a good old soul," was Hetty's only comment.

"Yes, mamma, but you have missed the point I wished to make. It is so embarrassing to have people call on me and make remarks that I must either correct by telling them plainly how I am situated, or else that I must pass unnoticed, as if they were true, and so, as it were, silently indorse a false view."

"My dear, I don't see how you can help yourself. You

cannot blow a trumpet before you proclaiming to all and sundry the wickedness of your husband in deserting you, his lawful wife, and marrying, feloniously, another woman! You cannot even tell that to your visitors in confidence. It would not become you to do so."

"No, mamma, dear, I cannot; but some day some visitor will innocently ask me some straightforward, plain question, which will require an answer, involving a confession of my real position. Oh! what shall I do in such a case?"

"My dear child, wait until that day comes and that question is asked. That will be time enough to worry about it. Jennie! the secret of peace is the practice of faith. Do your present duty, bear your present burden, enjoy your present blessings, and leave the future to the Lord. You have nothing to do with it. For you it has not even an existence," said Hetty.

Early in December news came in a letter from Mr. Randolph Hay, in Paris, to his bailiff, Mr. John Prowt, announcing the return of the squire, with his wife and a party of friends, to spend the Christmas holidays at the Hall. The house was to be made ready for them by the fifteenth of the month.

Again all the estate, all the village and all the surrounding country were agog with anticipations of the free festivities that should glorify the triumphal entry of the new squire upon his paternal estate.

Every one who came to call at the rectory talked of nothing but the expected event.

On the next Sunday morning the Rev. Mr. Campbell preached an awful warning from the text:

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

And in the afternoon he preached a similar jeremiad from another text:

"I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

"Yet he passed away, and lo! he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

In the course of the week there came dire news to the parish. A telegram from his attendant physician in Cannes announced to Mr. Campbell the death of his rector, the Rev. Dr. Orton, and added that his body would be brought

to the rectory to be interred under the chancel of the Haymore church.

The Rev. James Campbell had been prepared for this blow for many weeks, or at least he thought he had been so; yet when it fell it nearly overwhelmed him. He was grieved for the loss of his friend and he was perplexed for his household. At first he did not know what to do at all. He was not a man of resources. Should he immediately vacate the rectory with his family, and go to the village tavern, horrid, beery place, with a bar and taproom, or should he seek lodgings in the village, dreadful, little, stuffy rooms, in such a place, or should he remain at the rectory until the arrival of the family with the remains of the deceased?

At the church he must remain, of course; but at the rectory when the family of the late rector were returning with his remains.

The family of the late rector, by the way, consisted of an aged widow and a maiden daughter, both of whom were with him at Cannes, and two unmarried sons, one a professor at Oxford, and the other a popular preacher in London. The curate consulted his wife.

"Telegraph the widow and know her will before you take any step," was Hetty's advice, and Jimmy acted upon it.

In a few hours came a courteous answer from Miss Orton, saying, in effect, that Mr. Campbell was by no means to disturb himself or his family. That the delicate condition of the widow's health must prevent her from leaving a sunny climate for a frosty one at this severe season; that the daughter would stay with her mother; that the remains of the deceased rector would be accompanied by his two sons, and taken directly from the train to the chancel of the church, where the second funeral services would be held on Friday, at 4 P. M. (the first having been held at Cannes), immediately after which the sons would leave for London and Oxford. So the curate's family need not be disturbed in the rectory until the appointment of the new rector.

"'Until the appointment of the new rector!' How long reprieve would that be?" inquired the curate. And then he blamed himself for his selfishness in thinking so much of his own and his family's interests, when he should be thinking only of his departed friend.

On Friday morning the parish church at Haymore was

decked in solemn funeral array to receive the remains of its rector. The pulpit, altar and chancel were draped with crape. Places of business and schools were all closed for the day, and all the parishioners filled the church, many in deep mourning, and all the others with some badge of mourning on their dresses.

The wife and daughter of the curate sat in the rectory pew. There, later, they were joined by the two sons of the deceased rector.

The curate, in full vestments, waited the arrival of the casket, and, book in hand, went to meet it at the church door, through which, upon a bier of ebony, covered with a pall of black velvet, it was borne by six bearers, and marshaled it up the aisle and before the chancel, repeating the sublime words of our Lord:

"I am the resurrection and the life. He that liveth and believeth on me shall never die. And he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

When the bier, with th casket, was set down before the altar, and the chief mourners—the two sons of the deceased, who had followed it—had taken their seats in the rectory pew, then the funeral services, conducted by the curate, went on to their solemn ending.

At the close the parishoniers came out of their pews in an orderly manner, and passing on from the right to the left before the casket, took their last look at the mask of their deceased pastor.

At last the door of the crypt below the chancel was opened, and the pallbearers bore the casket down the narrow stairs and laid it in the leaden coffin and lifted it to the stone niche prepared to receive it.

Then the "dust to dust" was spoken, and the minister came up again, went to the altar, pronounced the benediction, and so dismissed the congregation.

As the two sons of the late rector came out of their pew they met and shook hands with the curate, but declined his invitation to the rectory, saying that they were about to return immediately to Cannes, to remain with their widowed mother for the few days in which they would absent themselves from their professional duties.

So they took leave of the curate and his wife and daugh-

ter, entered a carriage that was waiting, and drove off to their train.

The curate, leaving his parishioners talking together in groups in the churchyard, while the sexton was closing up the church, followed his wife and daughter through the gate in the wall that divided that cemetery from the rectory grounds.

He went directly to his study to compose himself before joining his wife and daughter in the parlor.

But what he found there did not tend to his composure. A letter, with a Paris postmark, was lying on the table. He dropped into a chair and took it. At first he thought it must be from Kightly Montgomery, whom he knew to be flourishing in Paris under the name of Randolph Hay; but a moment's reflection assured him that the false claimant was not likely to know of the accident of James Campbell's temporary charge of the Haymore parish.

He opened the letter, glanced at the signature, and saw that it was not a stranger's, and then read as follows:

“PARIS, December 13, 187—.

“REVEREND AND DEAR SIR: I learned with extreme grief a few days ago of the lamented death of the late honored rector of Haymore. I immediately came over to the city to see my brother-in-law, Mr. Hay, and apply to him for the living which is in his gift. He has been pleased to bestow it on me. My induction will date from the first of January next. I do not wish to inconvenience you, but I should be obliged if you could vacate the rectory in time to have the house prepared for my reception. Mr. Randolph Hay and his wife will be going to Haymore Hall for the Christmas holidays with a party of friends, of which, at his invitation, I have the happiness to make one. We shall, therefore, soon meet at Haymore. With best respects to Mrs. Campbell, I remain, dear sir, very truly yours,

“CASSIUS LEEGH.”

“Oh, my beloved helpless ones! What will become of you now?” moaned the curate, covering his eyes.

CHAPTER XV

THE CURATE'S TROUBLE

AFTER brooding over this disastrous letter for a long hour the curate summoned enough courage to arise and go to his wife and take counsel with her.

This was, indeed, a trouble that he dared not keep from her, even to spare her from anxiety; for it was absolutely necessary that they should take immediate measures for removal from the rectory and settlement in lodgings somewhere in the town before the arrival of the new incumbent; or, so at least it seemed to the curate in his dismayed state of mind.

He went directly into the back parlor, where the fire was burning cheerfully in the grate, the tea table was set, and Hetty resting in her low rocking-chair on the rug.

"Where is Jennie?" inquired the curate, dropping into another chair beside his wife.

"In her bedroom, putting her baby to sleep," replied Hetty.

"Well, I am glad the child is not here just now. I have bad news to tell you, my dear."

"Eh? Bad news? What is it, Jimmy? But, dear me, don't look so dreadfully cast down! It cannot be such awfully bad news, since you, I, Jennie and the baby are all safe and sound in the house. But what, then, is your bad news?"

"I have lost my position here, and we shall have to leave the rectory," replied Mr. Campbell in a tone of despair.

"Let me take a look at you?" said his wife, rising, giving him her hand, helping him to his feet, and surveying him all around. "Well, I don't see that you have lost a limb, or any mental or bodily faculty, that you need look so woe-begone! As for losing your position, of course you lost that when the old rector died; and as for leaving the rectory, we all knew that we should have to do that."

"Yes, but not so soon. We shall have to vacate by the first of January."

"Well, that gives us plenty of time to choose new lodg-

ings. I would not 'fash my beard' about that, if I were you, Jimmy! But why must we move by that time?"

"Because my successor, or rather Dr. Orton's successor, is appointed."

"Already!"

"Yes, already."

"Upon my word, there has been but little time lost! And you have received notice to quit?"

"Yes, in a letter from the new incumbent, which I found lying on my study table when I came in from the church."

"Who is he, then?"

"'Who is he?' That is the very worst of all. Do you remember that fellow, Cassius Leegh, who used to come to Medge parsonage long ago and fasten on us for weeks?"

"I should think so!"

"He was the son of a small shopkeeper in the borough, London, studied for the ministry as a matter of pride and ambition; but, morally and spiritually, as unfit for the pulpit as a man can well be! I do not know how he has contrived to get himself inducted into this living, except upon the basis that he and the new squire are birds of a feather!"

"Stop!" exclaimed Hetty as a sudden light dawned on her mind—"I understand it all perfectly now! Don't you know that this man, this so-called new squire of Haymore, married in New York a young lady by the name of Leegh?"

"I paid no attention to the name of the lady," replied the curate.

"Well, naturally I did, being a woman, you know. And the bride's name was Leegh! And surely you have heard Cassius Leegh speak of his beautiful sister Lamia, who was taken up by a wealthy New York family?"

"Why—yes—certainly!"

"That is it, then. This man Leegh, no doubt, sought out his brother-in-law and put in his plea for the living, even before Dr. Orton was dead, and so he has secured it, and lost no time in warning you out. But I wonder if he happened to mention your name to the 'squire,' for if so, the said squirfe, finding out that you were here, would scarcely venture to set foot within the place until you should be gone."

"No," said Mr. Campbell emphatically; "knowing the man as well as I do, I can say most positively that he has

never mentioned my name to his patron, or even alluded to the fact that the late Dr. Orton left a temporary substitute to fill his pulpit, when he himself went away for his health, lest, you see, the knowledge of this fact should cause the squire to take more time in appointing Dr. Orton's successor. Don't you see?"

"Yes. To leave the absent squire to believe that the parish of Haymore was entirely destitute of a pastor, would, of course, hasten the patron, who wishes the good opinion of his people, to appoint an incumbent, and the most natural thing would be to appoint his brother-in-law. I wish he were a better man."

"So do I, with all my heart"!

"Well! we are in Heaven's hands. And as we must clear out by the first of January, and get into new lodgings somewhere or other, I will go out the first thing after breakfast to-morrow morning to look them up," said Hetty cheerfully.

"Lodgings in this town!" ruefully grunted the curate.

"They needn't be in this town. There are, no doubt, plenty of farmhouses in the surrounding country where we may get them very cheap, and very wholesome and pleasant."

"Yes; but how are we to pay, even for the cheapest?"

"Jimmy Campbell! You a minister of the gospel, and have no more faith than to ask such a question! If you have lost your position here, and if we must leave the pleasant rectory, still we are three able-bodied people, who, if we do the best we can, and work at any honest thing our hands may find to do, will be helped by the Lord, and will do very well and pay our way."

"Oh, Hetty, my dear, you have had no experience in a bitter struggle with the world!"

"If I have not, it is well, perhaps, that I should have. And I am ready to engage in the struggle, though I do not see why it need be a bitter one, but just a healthful one."

"You have a healthful nature, dear, that is certain. As for me, I sometimes think I am falling weak in body and in mind," sighed the curate.

"No, no, dear Jimmy; not weak, only overworked and weary. Why, you have not had a vacation for eighteen years, to my certain knowledge. So long a strain might have made an idiot or a 'damp, unpleasant corpse' of any

man less strong and brave than yourself," said the wife with affectionate fervor.

"It helps me to see your faith in me, dear," he sighed as he took her hand and pressed it.

"As for me, Jimmy, I am glad that you will be obliged to rest for a few weeks or months. Don't doubt. You must rest. It is our turn now. Mine and Jennie's. We must work."

"You! What in this world could you do?"

"A good many things. We—Jennie and I—could teach English and French, music and drawing, to young ladies, or A B C's to little children. Failing that, we could take in dressmaking or plain sewing. Failing that, I could go out as sick nurse, and Jennie could do up fine laces."

"Hetty, you talk wildly."

"Not at all. Unless you preach wildly. I am only going to put into practice what you preach. You tell the artisans and agricultural laborers that work is worship."

"I would not mind your teaching——" slowly began the curate.

"Of course you would not," promptly assented his wife; "and I should prefer it. Teaching is, conventionally, considered a very 'genteel' occupation for a poor lady. And for that, and a few other unworthy reasons, I would rather teach than do anything else. But if I cannot get teaching to do I hope I am Christian enough to take whatever work I can get, whether it should be dressmaking, plain sewing, sick nursing, or—washing and ironing. There! Even that! I am ashamed of myself for even preferring a 'genteel' occupation to an humble one which is equally useful. But I won't let my feelings govern me in this; and so sure as you have to leave your situation here, you shall take a rest after twenty years' hard labor, and Jennie and I will go to work at whatever we can get to do."

"Hetty, you amaze and distract me! You do, indeed!"

"Look here, Jim. I have not kept my eyes shut all my life, and this is what I have seen—many unsuccessful professional 'gentlemen and ladies,' who have not talent enough to climb where 'there is more room higher up,' or even to keep their footing on the level where they were born, but yet who will struggle, slip, flounder, suffer and sin where

they are rather than take a step 'lower down,' as they would consider it, but where there is also 'more room.' "

"I don't quite follow you, Hetty."

"This is what I mean: Take an illustration. A man may be an unsuccessful lawyer, but his knowledge of law would make him so much better a clerk that his chances of employment in that capacity would be much greater than those of other competitors. Another man may fail as a minister, but he might make all the better schoolmaster. A woman may fail as a teacher, but succeed as a nurse. And what I would both inculcate and practice is this: That when man or woman fails in the line of life they have been born into or chosen for themselves, and when they have neither the power to rise above the level or to keep their footing upon it, let them not give up in despair or struggle in vain, but step frankly down to an humbler and honester position. There is always some work of some sort to be got. He who said 'Six days shalt thou labor' will give work to every hand willing to take it, though it may not be the kind of work their pride would like best. As for me and my daughter, whatever our 'hands find to do, we will do it with our might,' whether we like it or not."

"But, my dear, do you really not care about leaving this beautiful home?"

"Under the circumstances, I should not care to stay, even if we could. Should you? Reflect. The new squire will be here in a few days. You will have to denounce him as an impostor, a fraudulent claimant, a bigamous bridegroom. But it would take time to prove these charges. Could you stay in the parish and preach in the church during that time with any sort of peace to us all? No. Better that we should go away, and the sooner we go the better."

"My dear, I shall easily prove the fellow to be a bigamist; but as his crime was committed in the United States of America, I cannot prosecute him for it here in England. Neither can I prove him to be a fraudulent claimant. I have been turning that matter over in my mind, and I do not even know that he is one."

"What!" exclaimed Hetty with wide-open eyes. "You do not know him to be a fraudulent claimant when you

know that his name is Kightly Montgomery, and that he calls himself Randolph Hay?"

"See here, my love. I know nothing of the conditions of inheritance that rule this estate. I know nothing of the history of the family or their intermarriages with other families. How should I, coming here a stranger from the south of England?"

"I should think it could not require much experience to teach you that when a man's name is Kightly Montgomery and he calls himself Randolph Hay, he is a liar, swindler and an impostor."

"But consider, dear, he may be next of kin and heir-at-law, and his name now have been legally changed as the condition of his inheritance. His mother or his grandmother may have been born a daughter of Hay, of Haymore. The estate may have 'fallen to the distaff,' as it is called—that is, to the female line, and so the heir through that line might be obliged to take the family name as the condition of his heirship. Now do you see?"

"Yes, I see what you mean. But your theory has so many 'mays' that it won't do. As for me, I prefer to think the villain a fraudulent claimant as well as a bigamous bridegroom."

They were interrupted by a ring at the doorbell.

Mr. Campbell went to answer it. It was his custom always, when at home, to do so, to save the steps of the rectory's one elderly servant-woman.

There was a hanging lamp in the little hall between the parlor and the study that gave but a subdued light. They had no gas, and oil was dear, and economy necessary.

Mr. Campbell opened the door, expecting to see no one but the little old sexton. He saw, instead, the tallest and finest looking athlete he had ever seen in or out of a circus; but he could not distinguish his features.

"The Rev. Mr. Campbell?" said the stranger interrogatively.

"That is my name. What can I do for you?" inquired the curate, who, now that his eyes had got used to the obscurity, saw that the colossus was clothed from head to heel in an outlandish costume of dressed buckskin trimmed with fur, and that his stature was heightened, and his face

shortened by the tall fur cap he wore pulled low down over his forehead and ears, for the night was cold.

"My name is Longman—Samson Longman, at your service, sir. I have been directed by the people at Chuxton to come to you, sir, for information concerning one Elizabeth Longman, widow——" The speaker's voice trembled and broke.

"Your mother!" said the curate gravely. "She is well and happy as she can be, without the son she is always pining for and praying for."

"Heaven be praised for that! And may the Lord forgive me. Where is she, sir, if you please?"

"With us here in the house, our cherished housekeeper, almost our mother——"

"Thank the Lord! Can I see her, sir, now, at once? I have come a long way to ask her forgiveness at last, and to stay with her forever."

"Come into my study. We must prepare her for the sight of her son, for although she seems to be always expecting you, yet the sudden meeting might be too much for her," said the curate as he closed the front door after the entrance of his visitor and led the way into the study.

"Now, Mr. Longman, sit down here at my desk and write a letter to your mother. It need be only a line or so, to give me the means of breaking the glad tidings safely to her ears," said Mr. Campbell as he turned up the light of the study lamp and placed a chair for the visitor.

Longman obeyed like a child, and sat down and wrote his letter.

"Will that do?" he inquired as he put the sheet of paper into the curate's hands.

"Yes! that will do very well. Now put it into an envelope and seal and direct it regularly," said the curate when he had read and returned the letter.

Again Longman obeyed like a child, and when he had sealed the letter, arose and placed it in the hands of the curate.

Resume your seat and wait for my return," said Mr. Campbell as he left the study.

He went first into the parlor.

Hetty was still sitting there alone. Jennie was still with her baby in the bedroom.

"Who was that, Jim? A man come to serve you with a writ of eviction?" inquired Hetty mischievously.

"Hardly, my dear. But I am sure you will be happy to hear who it was."

"Who was it, then?"

"Elspeth Longman's prodigal son returned."

"Oh-h-h, Jim!" exclaimed Hetty, jumping up, her face perfectly radiant with benevolent delight.

"Yes, dear. And now, if you please, I will take you to see him in the study, where you can talk to him while I go and break these 'glad tidings of great joy' to the poor, long-suffering mother."

"Oh, yes! I would love to go! What is the boy like?"

"'Boy?' 'Like?' He is like the Apollo Belvedere, or like the Colossus of Rhodes. A superb, a stupendous fellow. But all dressed in hides like a North American Indian, or a prehistoric Norseman. But come and see!" said Mr. Campbell, leading the way to the study.

Hetty followed, now half anxious, half afraid to see the savage.

As they entered Longman, seeing the lady, arose, bowed and handed a chair with so much ease, dignity and grace that Mrs. Campbell was surprised, pleased and reassured.

"Mr. Longman, this lady is my wife. She will entertain you while I go to your mother," said the curate.

Longman bowed more profoundly than before, and murmured something to the effect that he was most honored and grateful to be permitted to make the lady's acquaintance; but the hunter was always shy in the society of gentlewomen.

Then Mr. Campbell, knowing that Hetty could give the prodigal son more satisfactory information about his mother in five minutes than any other creature could in five years, went out and left them together.

He passed through the parlor and opened the kitchen door. He saw Elspeth sitting before the stove, knitting, while she waited for her muffins to bake.

"Will you come into the parlor for a moment? I wish to speak to you, Mrs. Longman," said the curate.

"Yes, sir," replied the woman, rising and untying her kitchen apron, which she took off and hung over the back of her chair. Then she went into the parlor.

"Take Mrs. Campbell's rocking-chair while we talk. Save your back whenever you can, Mrs. Longman."

"Oh, no, sir, it better becomes me to stand in your reverence's presence."

"Pray, sit down. No, but I insist upon it. I have something to say to you which cannot be said in a minute."

The widow sighed profoundly and sank into the easy-chair. She thought she knew what was coming. Without the least intention of eavesdropping, she had heard enough of the conversation that had that evening passed between the minister and his wife—and which, by the way, had never been intended to be concealed—to know that they expected to leave the rectory under such reverse of fortune as would compel them to use the closest economy in their domestic arrangements.

Therefore Elspeth thought that she had been summoned to the parlor to receive her "warning" or her discharge. And she felt not so sorry for herself in the prospect of losing a good home as for the curate and his wife on having to dispense with her services. She was turning over in her meek mind the question of how, without seeming presumptuous, **she** could offer to remain with them and serve them without wages, just so long as her strength and also her clothes and shoes should last, and if they could afford to keep her even on such easy terms as her board and lodging.

Mr. Campbell broke gently in upon her troubled thoughts by asking her:

"Have you ever received any letter from your son since he has been away, Mrs. Longman?"

"Not one, sir, though I feel sure in my mind that he has writ to me, maybe many letters, and they have all gone astray; and then what hurts me worst of all is that he may think I must have got some of his letters and as I was too mad at him and too unforgiving to answer any of them. And I don't even know where to write to tell him any better."

"But when at last you meet, face to face, then you can tell him."

"Oh, yes, sir. And I know that we shall meet again. He who raised the widow's son from his bier will hear the poor old widowed mother's prayer, and bring her boy back. Though it seems long! Oh, it seems long! But all the

while it comforts me to think that if I don't know where he is, the Lord does! If I can't see him, the Lord can! And I may pray to the Lord for my boy and He will hear me!"

"How old are you, Mrs. Longman?" was the curate's next seemingly irrelevant question.

"Forty-three, sir; will be forty-four on the thirty-first of December. But I must look full sixty, my hair is so white, and my face so thin and wrinkly."

"Well, you have good health, and you Yorkshire people are long-lived. You may live forty years longer yet—forty happy years with your son."

"Oh, minister! what does your reverence mean? Have you heard anything? Have you got anything to tell me?" inquired the mother, startled by something in the curate's tone or look, and speaking with repressed eagerness.

"Well, something has come. Have you anybody who would be likely to write a letter to you?"

"Nobody in the world, sir, except my boy, and I have never had a letter from him, as I told you."

"Well, a letter has come for you. I did not give it at first, for fear it might startle you. I think it must be from your son."

"Oh, give it to me, sir, please!—now, this moment!"

The curate handed the letter. The woman seized it, held it under the light of the lamp and devoured the superscription with ravenous eyes.

"Oh, yes! It is his writing! It is his own! Oh, thank the Lord! Oh, thank the Lord!" she cried, falling on her knees and sinking her head in the cushion of the chair. But she soon arose and drew her spectacles from her pocket and opened the letter and tried to read it; but the words ran together in dark lines before her disturbed vision, and she could not decipher them.

"Oh, sir, be so kind! Read it for me! Please do!"

"With pleasure," said Mr. Campbell. And he took the letter, and omitting date, read as follows:

"MY BELOVED MOTHER——"

"The darling boy!" ejaculated Elspeth in rapture.

"I have crossed the sea and come back to England——"

"He is in England! In England! Oh, thank Heaven! Thank Heaven! Go on, sir! Please go on!" impatiently exclaimed Elspeth.

The curate smiled at her impetuosity and continued :

“ ‘To see your dear face again, and to beg your forgiveness, which I know you will grant me, though I know I do not deserve it——’ ”

“Ah, hear the noble fellow! Taking all the blame on himself, though I was more in fault nor him! But go on, sir! Pray go on!”

“ ‘I long to be with you, to stay with you all the rest of our lives; to work for you, and to try to make you happy and comfortable, and so atone for all the trouble I have caused you——’ ”

“Oh! the grand son! the noble boy! He will stay with me all the rest of my life! Oh, that will be joyful!” exclaimed Elspeth, clapping her hands and breaking into a camp meeting revival hymn, very appropriate, it is true:

“ ‘Oh! that will be joyful!
Joyful! Joyful! Joyful!
Oh! that will be joyful,
To meet and part no more!’ ”

“It will be like heaven, sir! like heaven! to have my boy with me all the rest of my life! But do go on, sir! Forgive a poor mother’s impatience, and read me what else he says!” she cried, ready to turn from rapture to tears.

“There is not much more,” said Mr. Campbell. “Only this:

“ ‘Please, dearest mother, if you can pardon me, let me know when I can come to see you. And believe me your sincerely penitent and evermore loving and dutiful son,
“ ‘SAM.’ ”

“Oh! the darling of darlings! the angel of angels! Oh, please, dear minister, write for me directly, for I never can hold a pen in the hand that is trembling for joy and blessedness and gratitude, and tell him to come immediately. But, no! I will go to him! Where is he? I’ll get the Red Fox carryall and start for the station immediately. Truly, where shall I go? Tell me, minister, dear! Look at the letter! Where is it dated from?” she eagerly demanded.

“You will not have far to go. He is in this village,” said Mr. Campbell, smiling.

"In this village! Oh! then he is at the Red Fox! Let me get my bonnet and cloak!" she cried, rising to her feet.

"He is nearer to you than that," said the minister. Then he drew the woman's arm within his own and led her into the study.

"Mother!" exclaimed Longman, starting up and striding toward her with outstretched arms.

"Oh, my darling! my darling!" cried Elspeth, and she fell fainting on his bosom.

So much for the careful breaking of the news.

But she did not swoon to unconsciousness. She almost immediately recovered.

Then Longman seated her in the large armchair, and placed himself on the hassock at her feet. She put her arms over his shaggy head and smiled through her tears.

"Come!" said Hetty, laughing. "You and I are *de trop* in a room with such a pair of lovers as these!" And she slipped her hand through her husband's arm and dragged him from the room without the reunited pair—so absorbed in their meeting—seeing them go.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SQUIRE'S ARRIVAL

HETTY drew her husband back into the cozy parlor, where they found Jennie waiting alone.

"Well, I have put the baby to sleep at last! Little witch! she wanted to laugh and crow and kick all night. Such a time as I had getting her quiet! But where have you two been? You look—just as if you had come from a circus!" said Jennie.

"So we have! or rather from a domestic drama!" exclaimed Hetty, laughing; and then she told her daughter all about the sudden return of Samson Longman, and the joy of his mother.

Jennie listened in sympathetic delight.

"And now, my dear, you may come in the kitchen and help me to bring in the tea. Elspeth has forgotten that there is any such thing as tea in the world. And who can

blame her!" exclaimed Hetty as she left the room attended by her daughter.

It was, indeed, nearly an hour beyond their usual tea time.

The tea was drawn too much, and the muffins were baked too dry; nevertheless, father, mother, and daughter enjoyed the refreshment.

There was a good-sized dining-room in the rear of the house on the other side of the hall, but for reasons of economy it was not used in cold weather, as it would require another fire, the meals being served in the family sitting-room or parlor.

Now, however, as soon as the curate and his family arose from the tea, his wife said:

"Jimmy, we must be kind. The kindlings and coal are all laid in the grate of the back room ready for lighting a fire when required. Do, dear, go and start it; and Jennie and I will clear off this tea table, and set another in there for Elspeth and her big boy to take their tea comfortably; for it is not every day that a prodigal son returns."

"And you just know how it is yourselves, don't you, papa and mamma?" inquired the prodigal daughter, tenderly.

"Yes, we do; and I will go right off and do as you wish," exclaimed the curate merrily as he left the room.

Hetty and Jennie went eagerly to work, and soon cleared away their own table, and then went and set one in the dining-room, where the curate had already kindled a good fire in the grate.

Hetty brought out from all the treasures of pantry and cupboard, and in addition to the substantial fare of cold beef and ham, cheese, bread and butter, she laid out cake, honey and sweetmeats.

When all this was done she made a large pot of fresh tea and set it to draw. Finally she returned to the parlor and sat down with her husband and daughter in pleasant expectancy for developments from the study.

She had not to wait long. Very soon came Elspeth into the parlor, her eyes shining with happiness, and said:

"If you please, sir, Samson—that is my boy—would like to thank you and say good-evening before he goes away." Then noticing for the first time that the tea table had been

cleared away, she started with a little look of dismay, and before anybody could speak again, she said:

"Oh! I am so sorry! I clean forgot! I——"

"Don't say another word, dear woman. It is all right—quite right. Jennie and I did all that was necessary, and took pleasure in doing it. And as for your boy saying good-night and going away before he has broken bread with you, that cannot be permitted on any account. There! take him into the dining-room, where you will find a fine fire, and a tea table, and a pot of tea simmering on the hob."

"Oh, ma'am, but you are too good!"

"Nonsense! I'm delighted—we are all delighted! And, Elspeth, when you have had your tea, bring your boy in to us while you go upstairs and make him up a bed in the little spare room next to your own. Do you hear?"

"Oh, ma'am, you are too good! Whatever shall I do to repay your kindness!" exclaimed the grateful creature, with eyes full of tears, as she lifted Hetty's hand and pressed it to her lips.

"Do just as she tells you, Mrs. Longman. And say to your son that we should be pleased to have him remain here with you until after Christmas. He shall be most cordially welcome to us all," added Mr. Campbell.

"God bless you, sir, for your great kindness; for indeed it will be a great joy to me to have my boy under the very same roof with me for a few days, now that he has come back," said Elspeth, her wintry face in an April aspect of smiles and tears.

"And, of course, it is a delight to us to be able to contribute to your happiness, you know," said Mr. Campbell cheerily.

Elspeth dropped her old-fashioned courtesy and went out.

And very soon the three remaining in the parlor heard the mother and her son going down the passage to the rear dining-room that was behind the study.

Hetty and Jennie took their needlework, and Mr. Campbell picked up the morning paper, which no one had had time to look at all day long, and began to read to them items of news.

So an hour passed.

The reunited mother and son lingered long in the dining-room, but at length they came out and entered the parlor.

Longman went at once up to Mr. Campbell and said:

"Sir, I thank you very much for the hospitality you have so kindly proffered me, and which, for my mother's sake, I am very happy to accept."

"Don't mention it, Mr. Longman. Have a seat. This is my daughter, Mrs. Montgomery," said the curate, rising and handing a chair.

Longman bowed profoundly to the young lady, and then dropped into his seat.

Elspeth was speaking to Mrs. Campbell:

"Which room did you say, ma'am, he might have?"

"Any vacant one you please. The little room next to your own you might prefer, perhaps," returned Hetty.

"Yes, ma'am, I would, thanky, ma'am," said Elspeth, and she left the parlor.

"When did you reach England, Mr. Longman?" inquired Hetty, to make conversation and set the embarrassed colossus at his ease.

"Only about twenty-four hours since, ma'am. And I had the honor of traveling in company with the new Squire of Haymore and his bride, expected by the people in this neighborhood," replied Longman, looking down on his own folded hands, so that he failed to see the effect of his words; for Mr. Campbell started, Hetty gasped, and Jennie turned pale.

And the conversation that followed was all at cross-purposes, for Longman came to speak of Randolph Hay, the only true Squire of Haymore, and his wife, Judith, and of their crossing the Atlantic Ocean together; while the curate and his family spoke of Kightly Montgomery, the fraudulent claimant, and his deceived bride, Lamia Leegh, and of their crossing the English Channel.

"The Squire of Haymore and his lady are in England, then?" was the remark with which the curate reopened the conversation.

"Yes, sir. I had the honor of coming over in the same steamer with them. We landed yesterday."

"And you left them in London?"

"Beg pardon, sir, no. We traveled from London together. We reached Chuxton this afternoon about sunset. We had to wait there for a conveyance hither, and while we waited, and Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay and their party took

luncheon, I went in search of my dear mother, expecting to find her there where I had left her, but I heard instead that she was living at the rectory with your family. So then I told Mr. Randolph Hay, and he very kindly offered me a seat in his carriage, and so brought me on here. I rode to the Hall with them, and there left them and walked on here."

"And do you mean to say that the squire and his lady are now really at the Hall?" demanded the astonished curate.

"Yes, sir, as I said, or should have said, they arrived to-night a little after dusk."

"But," continued the deeply perplexed curate, "I don't understand. The squire and—his lady were to have sent a telegram from London announcing their approach, and were expected to make quite a triumphal entry by daylight, amid the ringing of bells and singing of children, and flinging of flowers, and all the parade and pageantry that this season would permit. Prowt, the bailiff, has had his orders to be in readiness for weeks past, and for days has been waiting a telegram."

"I don't know how that is, sir. I know that Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay came home very quietly indeed," replied Longman.

"But was it not a great surprise, not to say shock, to the servants at the Hall? And were they at all ready for the squire and—his lady?"

"I think so, sir. I know Mr. Randolph Hay sent a dispatch to the housekeeper at the Hall, with instructions to have rooms aired and fires built, dinner prepared, and everything in readiness to receive himself and his wife this evening. I know it, sir, for I carried the dispatch to the telegraph office myself," said Longman.

"The people will be very much disappointed at missing the pageantry," remarked the curate.

"I do not think Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay cared for display. I am a little surprised that it should have been thought of in connection with them," said Longman, reflectively.

"Why, man alive, it was by the squire's own orders, without the slightest suggestion from anybody here!" laughed the curate.

"It was not like him. A more modest and unpretending gentleman I do not know anywhere in this world!" persisted Longman.

The curate repressed an inclination to utter a long, low whistle; but he did say to himself: "So much for the blindness of prejudice."

"Oh! I have just thought of it! I will tell you why I think the triumphal entry was abandoned!" exclaimed Hetty.

"Why?" inquired her husband.

"Why, on account of the death of the rector."

"Oh! to be sure! that was it; though it was a more gracious thought than I should have given the man credit for," added Mr. Campbell.

At this moment Elspeth came in, smiling. She had been absent much longer than they had expected her to be; for she had not only prepared the little spare bedroom for her son, but she had washed up all her dishes and done all her usual evening work. She carried a lighted candle in a low, broad brass candlestick. She courtesied to the ladies and gentleman, as was her custom, and then she said to her boy:

"And now, Sam, the room the kind master has given you is all ready, and I will show it to you if you will come."

And Longman arose, bade good-night to his hosts, and turned to leave the room, when Mr. Campbell said:

"But perhaps you would like to join us in our evening service."

Longman bowed in silence, and resumed his seat.

"Yes," said Elspeth brightly. "Every night and morning since I have been in this house has the minister prayed for my wandering boy's return, and now that he has come we will give thanks."

Jennie arose and got the Bible and prayer book and laid them before her father.

And the evening service began.

In the course of it Mr. Campbell did return "earnest and hearty thanks" for the restoration of the widow's son, and prayed that all wanderers from the spiritual fold of the Lord might likewise be brought back.

When the service was over, Elspeth, after bidding good-night to her friends, took up her candle and showed her boy

the way to his bedroom. And soon after the minister and his wife and daughter retired.

The next day was one of those benign autumn days that sometimes revisit us even late in December, to encourage and help us through the winter. The sky was radiantly clear and the sun dazzlingly bright. The many evergreen trees around the parsonage had something like the fresh verdure of early spring upon them. It was a day that any healthy person might have enjoyed the outdoor air without much extra clothing.

After breakfast Longman went over to the Hall to see his friends.

Mr. and Mrs. Campbell, standing together at the door, watched him walking down the walled road that led to the park gates.

"It is astonishing," said the curate, "that so honest a man as Longman should have such a respect for that villain Montgomery as he appears to have."

"I suppose the young fellow has never seen the villain's cloven foot, and men have no intuitions to guide them as we have, you know," replied Hetty.

And then, though the splendor of the day invited them to remain outdoors, they went inside, each to his or her own work.

The minister went to his study to work on his next Sunday morning's sermon. Hetty to her linen closet to look over her stores for mending. Jennie, well wrapped up, to take her baby, also warmly clad, through the garden walks. Elspeth to her kitchen to wash up the breakfast service.

The minister, however, had scarcely got under way with his manuscripts before the doorbell rang, and he sprang up to answer it.

Prowt, the bailiff of Haymore, stood there.

"Could I speak to your reverence a moment, sir?" he inquired.

"Certainly. Come in," replied Mr. Campbell, and led the visitor into the study.

"Well, minister," said the bailiff, as soon as they were both seated at the writing-table near the window, "it has come at last. I have got a dispatch from the squire, announcing his immediate arrival with his bride and his

brother-in-law, though not with the expected party of friends."

The curate started, and then passed his hand across his forehead, as if to clear away a cloud of perplexity. Had not Longman told him that the squire and his lady had arrived the night before? And he could not have made a mistake, because he came with them, and left them at the Hall. And now the bailiff tells him that he has received a dispatch, announcing the immediate arrival of the squire and his party. What did all this mean? At length an explanation suggested itself, and he spoke upon it.

"Has not that dispatch been delayed? Should it not have come yesterday?" he inquired.

"Oh, no, sir! It was dated this morning, and came an hour ago!" exclaimed the bailiff.

"Have you got it about you? Would you mind letting me see it?"

"Here it is, sir."

The bailiff drew the paper from his vest pocket and put it into the hands of the minister.

Mr. Campbell opened it and read:

"LANGHAM'S HOTEL, LONDON,

"December 15, 18—.

"To MR. JOHN PROWT, Haymore Lodge, Haymore, Yorkshire: I shall arrive with my wife and brother-in-law, the Rev. Cassius Leegh, by the one-thirty train, at Chuxton. Send one comfortable carriage to meet us.

"RANDOLPH H. HAY."

Mr. Campbell returned the slip of paper to the bailiff and fell into silence. He could make nothing of it. He was dumfounded.

"So you see it is all right, sir," said the bailiff. "I shall send the open barouche, as the day is so fine, and with two footmen, besides the coachman. I suppose they will enter this town about half-past two o'clock."

"Well," said the dazed curate, "what do you wish me to do?"

"If you would give orders to the bell ringers, sir, to be at their post, and also have the parish school children drawn up each side the road leading to the park gate——"

"It is rather an unfavorable season—December—for children to be parading outdoors," suggested the minister.

"Of course, sir, the kids can't wear the white frocks and pink sashes and wreaths of flowers on their bare heads, as they could have done three months ago; but they can wear their picturesque winter uniform of red cloaks and hoods, and black woolen stockings and gloves; and as the weather is so remarkably fine, and the hour just after noon, in the warmest part of the day, I do not think the exposure will hurt them. Do you?"

"N-oo! I do not suppose it will."

"Then will you kindly see to it, sir, that they are drawn up in proper array, to sing their songs of welcome and throw their flowers before the bridal pair?"

"Where will they get flowers at this season of the year?"

"Oh!—a—from the conservatories of the Hall, if from no other place. I will see that they are sent over to the schoolroom. I think, also, that many of the cottagers have a few late flowers in their gardens, such as chrysanthemums and dahlias and——"

"And do you think, Mr. Prowt, that because a newly married pair happens to be happy and prosperous, that living and blooming flowers should be torn from their warm conservatories and sunny gardens, to be thrown down in the dirt to perish under carriage wheels, in their honor? I don't."

"Why, minister. I never heard of such an objection!" said the astonished bailiff.

"Well, you hear it now. And it might be well for you to think of it. The custom is a barbarous one, suitable only to prehistoric savages."

The bailiff stared.

"And now, Mr. Prowt, I wish to say this to you—with the kindest feelings toward yourself, and with sincere regret that I must disappoint you—that I cannot and will not allow the church bells to be rung, or the parish children to parade, or any single movement to be made in honor of this incoming bridal pair which it is in my power to prevent," said the minister, all the more firmly because so quietly.

The bailiff stared in silence, too astonished to speak for a minute. Then he demanded:

"But why, in the name of Heaven, reverend sir, would you put such an affront upon the new squire and his bride?"

"I put no affront upon them. I simply decline to show them any honor whatever, or to allow any one under my authority to do so," emphatically responded the minister.

"But this is most amazing, sir. Why, if you please, do you refuse to honor them?"

"Because I cannot and must not."

"Yet, about three months ago, when there was first a talk of the new squire bringing home his bride, there was no one more interested than yourself."

"That is true. But since that date circumstances have come to my knowledge that have changed all my views, and must change all my actions, toward the incoming squire and his—lady; circumstances that quite justify me in my present course of conduct."

"May I ask your reverence what those circumstances are?"

"Not yet, Prowt. I cannot tell you. To-morrow or next day the whole parish may know."

"Well, I am perplexed. But, reverend sir, I must at least do my duty, and go over to the Hall to give directions there for the proper reception of the new squire, and send the carriage and servants to meet them. It is nine o'clock now, and they really ought to be off. I hope you do not blame me, sir, for doing my part."

"Certainly not. You must do your duty by your employer," said Mr. Campbell kindly.

"Good-morning, sir," said the bailiff, taking up his hat to go.

"Good-day, Mr. Prowt," replied the minister.

Even when the visitor was gone and the curate was alone he could not return to his manuscript sermon. It was impossible to concentrate his thoughts on the subject.

"Ah, well," he said at last, "I shall have to take out one of my old Madge sermons for Sunday morning. It will be new to these parishioners at least." And then he closed his desk, sat back in his armchair and gave himself up to the problem that was disturbing his mind.

The dispatch from the squire lay on the table before him. The bailiff had inadvertently left it behind him.

Mr. Campbell took it up, again read it carefully, and again passed his hand slowly over his forehead to clear away the thick clould of confusion.

The situation seemed inexplicable.

There was no doubt that this dispatch, dated this morning, signed Randolph Hay, and announcing the arrival of the squire and of his wife and brother-in-law on this day, was a perfectly genuine article and a very hard fact.

There was no doubt, either, that another Randolph Hay, with his wife and friends, had arrived at Haymore Hall in company with the indubitable traveling companion and eye-witness who had reported the fact to the minister's family.

Now what on earth did it all mean?

One Squire of Haymore and his wife at Haymore Hall, and another Squire of Haymore and his—lady on their way there!

Would the two parties meet to-day, and if so, what then?

The only possible theory of the situation, as it presented itself to the minister's mind, was this, upon which he finally settled—that the Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay who had arrived on the preceding evening and were now at the Hall were the real lord and lady of the manor, and that the so-called Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay who were expected to arrive to-day were the fraudulent claimants whom he had taken them to be.

He had not breathed a syllable of the first arrival to the bailiff, preferring to keep the matter to himself until he should see Samson Longman, who had walked over that morning to Haymore Hall, but would return to the rectory by midday.

But the backwoodsman came in a little sooner than he had been expected. He came at once to the study door and rapped.

Mr. Campbell bade him enter.

Longman's face was radiant with merriment, and in his hand he carried a letter, which he fondled playfully.

"Well, Longman, you have been to see your friends at the Hall?"

"Yes, sir."

"Please sit down and tell me all about it."

Longman settled himself in the largest leather chair, put his fur cap down on the floor beside him and fondled his letter.

"You found the young squire and his wife quite well after their journey?"

"Quite well, sir. And also very much delighted with their new home, which they saw for the first time by daylight this morning."

"Longman, you are sparkling all over with repressed amusement. What is the matter with you?"

"Anticipation of an entertainment at the Hall to-day, sir."

"I think I understand. Do your friends know that there is another Mr. Randolph Hay and his—lady expected at the Hall to-day?"

"Oh, yes, sir," exclaimed the giant, now bursting into a storm of laughter, which had to have its full vent before he could go on with his words. "Yes, sir. The bailiff came there an hour ago, full of importance, to announce the fact. He was somewhat amazed to find the young squire and his wife already in possession. But they are quite ready for the reception of the newcomers, sir, and that is the entertainment I anticipate. Here, sir, is a letter the young squire has intrusted to me to hand you."

The minister took the missive, broke the seal and read:

"HAYMORE HALL, December 15, 18—.

"TO THE REV. JAMES CAMPBELL, Reverend and Dear Sir: Although I have not the honor of your personal acquaintance, yet I have heard enough of you to engage my sympathies and compel my respect. Therefore, I hope that you will forgive me for asking you to do me the favor to come this evening to the Hall to discuss with me the subject of the living of Haymore, which it is my privilege and pleasure to offer you, in the hope that you may do me the honor to accept it. May I presume, also, to ask you to waive ceremony, and bring your wife and daughter with you on this occasion? I have a special reason for this request, which, when you shall have heard from me, you will find to be perfectly satisfactory.

"I have the honor to be, reverend sir,

"Very respectfully yours, RANDOLPH HAY."

The curate rushed out of the study and into the room where his wife sat sewing in an avalanche of infirm linen and exclaimed:

"Hetty, we need never leave the rectory! I have got the Haymore living! Read that, and thank the Lord!"

CHAPTER XVII

A MEMORABLE JOURNEY

YES, it was true! Randolph Hay, the rightful heir, was in full possession of Haymore. He had also entered into his estate with much more ease than could have been anticipated either by himself, his friends or his lawyers.

To explain how this happened, a brief summary of events is necessary.

It will be remembered that Ran Hay, with his young bride, Judy, and a small party of friends, sailed on November the 29th from New York by the steamship *Boadicea*, bound for Liverpool.

Ran, Judy and Will Walling had staterooms in the first cabin; Mike, Dandy and Longman had berths in the second cabin.

This arrangement, on the part of the three last mentioned, was much against the will of Ran, who would gladly have provided his brother-in-law and his two friends with the best accommodations the ship afforded, but that from very delicacy of feeling toward them he could not offer to do so. Besides, he knew that all three of these men had money enough to pay for a first-class passage each, had they desired it, but that for prudential reasons Dandy and Longman did not choose to squander their savings in that needless manner, and that Mike cast in his lot with his two friends; and so their little party voyaged in the plain but clean and wholesome second cabin.

There could not, however, be much communication between the three in the first cabin and the three in the second, though they met occasionally on the common ground of the forward deck.

Here Ran had long talks with his friends, and learned

much more of the past history of Dandy and Longman than he had ever known before.

Here, Judy, wrapped from head to heel in her heavy fur cloak, would often join them, for the weather continued fine. "Wonderful!—just wonderful!" was the verdict of all the ship's passengers; the oldest "salt" declaring that never, at this season of the year, had he known such weather in crossing the Atlantic.

Not one of our party suffered from seasickness. The only effect the voyage seemed to have upon them was an increase of health, vigor and appetite.

Their ship was rather a slow one, that was all.

It was a splendid winter morning about the seventh day out. The sky, of a clear, deep blue, without a single cloud, and on fire with a sun too dazzling to be seen, overhung a sea whose waves were like molten sapphires. The ship, with all her snowy sails spread and filled, was flying on before a fresh, fair wind.

On the forward deck, grouped together, were Ran, Judy, Mike, Dandy and Longman. The hunter had been telling his story for the first time to Ran and Judy.

"And so you are from Chuxton! Is not that a strange coincidence? Haymore Hall and hamlet is in the neighborhood of Chuxton, I think," said Ran.

"About ten miles off, sir. Chuxton is the nearest market town and railway station to Haymore," replied Longman.

"Well, my dear fellow, as you say you would never have left your native country if you could have obtained employment to suit you——" Ran said in a modest and hesitating way.

"Among guns and game," Longman interjected with a laugh.

"Exactly—'among guns and game'—I do earnestly hope that it may be in my way to suit you. Longman, I know nearly nothing of my patrimonial estate, but I have heard my father say that there was no such place for game in all the North Riding. I hope and trust and pray," added Ran, with boyish earnestness, "that I may be able to make you head gamekeeper at Haymore without injustice to others."

"I would not take another man's place to his hurt, sir," said the hunter.

"I know that, good fellow. Nor would I offer you such

an affront. But it will hurt no one to make you an extra keeper at a good salary."

"There, now, Longman! D'ye moind that? Isn't it jist what I was afther tilling ye!" exclaimed Mike. "Didn't I say if Ran, or bigging his honor's pardin, Misther Hay, hadn't a place riddy made to shute ye, he'd crayate one? D'ye moind?"

"Something like that," replied the hunter, laughing. "But I really do not wish Mr. Hay to make a place for me."

"Friends," said the young squire, "we will leave that question until we get to Haymore. But in the meantime don't distress me by calling me Mr.—anybody! I am Ran to all my old companions."

"Ouns! But whatever would the gentry round Haymore be thinking to hear the squire called be his Christian name, with divil a handle to it, be the loikes av us?" demanded Mike, with a laugh.

"I do not care what they think! They will soon know that I and my Judy and my friends came from the mining camps in the backwoods and mountains of North America, and that they must not expect more polish from us or more politeness than neighborly, loving kindness inspires. And now, Dandy, old friend, what do you intend to do when we all reach England?" inquired Ran of the old man, who seemed to have been left out, or to have withdrawn himself from the conversation.

"Indeed, then, I don't know, sir! I hev'n't a living soul belonging to me in the old country except it is my brother's orphan child, my niece, Julia Quin. When I left England she was a good-looking young wench, some seventeen years old, and was at service in a parson's family down in Hantz. She'll be married by this time, I reckon, with no end of kids! But, anyways, I'll look her up, sir, if she is to be found."

"Have you ever heard from her since you left England?" inquired Judy, breaking into the conversation the first time for the last half hour, and interested the moment another woman was brought upon the tapis.

"Lor', no, Miss Judy!—which I beg your pardon, Mistress Hay; but I do be forgetting sometimes. Neither me nor mine was ever any great hand at letter writing. And

she was doing well at the vicarage, I knew. And I was wandering about, seeking of my fortune, which I never yet found, though I might have found it the very next blow of my pick, for aught I know, if I had had the perseverance to stay, which I couldn't have after the boys here left, and so for twenty years I haven't heard a word of my niece. She may be dead, poor wench; for death is no respecter of persons, though she was a fine, strapping, strong wench, too. Yes, that is so."

"I hope not. I hope she is alive and well for your sake. Where did you say you left her at service?"

"At the vicarage, ma'am, in my native town, ma'am."

"And what town was that?"

"Medge, ma'am. In Hantz, on the south coast, where I was born and raised."

Judy had started at the first mention of Medge. Now she hastily inquired:

"What was the name of the vicar?"

"One Rev. Mr. Campbell, ma'am; the Rev. Mr. James Campbell. He came from Scotland, horridly; but settled into the south coast of England. Yes, that was so."

By this time Ran was listening with the deepest interest to the words of old Dandy, but leaving Judy to sustain the conversation.

"Why, Mr. Quin, we know who he is," she gayly exclaimed.

"Do you know, ma'am? Indeed, and how, if you please?"

"Why, Mr. Quin, it is too long a story to tell you how now; and besides, it concerns other people that I would rather not talk about; but this I can tell you, that the Rev. Mr. Campbell is not now at Medge, but——"

"Where is he then, ma'am, if you please to tell me that I may know where to seek for him? For I shall go to him first of all to ask after my niece."

"He is quite at the opposite end of England. He is at Haymore Rectory, where we are all going."

"The Lord be good to us! Is that so?" exclaimed Dandy joyfully.

"Indeed, yes! And now, Mr. Quin, if you wish to hear news of your niece, Julia, you will have to go all the way to Haymore with us. And I am so glad that we will not be

separated. It will be so pleasant for us all to go together to Haymore."

"Yes, Dandy, old boy, and you must stop with me, you know, until you find your niece," added Ran.

"And will I see the Rev. Mr. James Campbell himself?" inquired Quin in some doubt.

"Of course you will. And as servants don't change places as often in the old country as they do in the new, it is more than likely you will find your niece at the rectory, unless she is married," said Judy.

"Or—dead, poor wench!" added Dandy.

"Oh, no, indeed. She's not dead! I'm certain of it," exclaimed Judy, with good-natured but inexcusable presumption.

"I'll take that for a prophecy, anyways, ma'am, and believe into it. Yes, that is so."

"And you will come with us to Haymore, Dandy?" said Ran.

"I thank you kindly, sir; I will."

"Pray, Mr. Quin, stop calling me sir. You are an old man and I am a young one, almost a boy, and it is not fitting for you to call me sir."

"Mr. Hay, I was brought up into the Church of England, and taught to be content with that station of life into which the Lord had called me; likewise, to respect my pastors and masters, and to honor my superiors. And twenty years' wandering among the mines haven't made me forget them airy lessons, nor yet my good manners, sir," said Dandy, with a ceremonious bow, as he lifted his fur cap from his bald head.

"Judy, can't you bring them to reason?" inquired Ran, with a laugh.

"Sorrow a worrd they'll listen to meself!" exclaimed Judy, backsliding into dialect, as she frequently did.

"Well, do as you please, or I'll make you!" laughed Ran.

And from that hour it was understood that the whole party should keep together until they should reach Haymore, instead of separating at Liverpool, as had been first intended.

The weather continued very fine, though very cold.

On the morning of the tenth they reached Queenstown.

There Mr. Walling went on shore and telegraphed to his

London correspondents, Messrs. Sothoron & Drummond, Attorneys-at-Law, Lincoln's Inns Fields, that his client, Mr. Randolph Hay, and himself would be in London on the afternoon of the twelfth.

The run from Queenstown to Liverpool was as fine as any preceding part of the voyage.

They reached port in the early dawn of the morning on the twelfth.

Without lingering longer in the city than was necessary to get their baggage through the customhouse and fortify themselves with a substantial early breakfast at the "Queen's," they took the first mail train for London, where they arrived in the middle of the afternoon.

Mr. Will Walling, an experienced traveler, who had been in London several times before, became the guide of the party, and took them from Euston Square down to Morley's Hotel, Trafalgar Square, where they secured a comfortable suite of apartments on the second floor front.

Mike, Dandy and Longman went to find cheaper quarters. Again Ran would gladly have entertained them at Morley's, but could not offer to do so without affronting their spirit of independence.

Even Mike, to whom Ran ventured an invitation, declined his brother-in-law's hospitality, and cast in his lot with his two old mining friends. But he promised to look in again in the evening to let Ran and Judy know where he and his companions had found quarters.

After a hasty dinner in the private parlor of the Hays, Mr. Will Walling left the young pair still over their dessert and went out and called a cab and drove to Lincoln's Inns Fields to call on Messrs. Sothoron & Drummond.

They had been the solicitors of the Hays, of Haymore, for many years, and were, of course, deeply interested in all that concerned them.

Much correspondence had already passed between the London and New York firms, bearing on the recent appearance of the undoubted lawful heir of Haymore in opposition to the fraudulent pretender, so that there was already a perfect understanding of the case established between them.

It was now a little after business hours, but Mr. Will Walling felt sure that, having received his dispatch an-

nouncing his visit, one or both members of the firm would remain at their office to receive him.

In fact, he found both gentlemen there. The case was considered much too important to admit of neglect or indifference, and being after office hours, they were quite at leisure to give their whole attention to the business in hand.

Mr. Walling spent four hours with Messrs. Sothoron & Drummond, and together the three gentlemen went through the mass of documents, all together constituting indisputable, immovable proof of Randolph Hay's identity as the only lawful heir of Haymore.

I will not weary my reader with any of the lawyers' talk, but hasten on to its results.

It was nearly nine o'clock when the three gentlemen, having brought their interview to an end, left the office together and separated, to seek their several destinations—Sothoron to his home on Clapham Common, Drummond to his club on Regent Street, and Walling to his friends at Morley's.

Mr. Will found Ran and Judy seated at the front window of their parlor, in which the gas had been turned down low to enable them to see out into the street, for they were gazing down on the panorama of the night scene on Trafalgar Square.

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Will, as he entered the room, flung his hat across the floor and dropped into a large easy-chair near the two young people, "are you ready to set out for Yorkshire and Haymore by the first mail train to-morrow morning?"

"What do you mean?" inquired Ran, looking around, rather startled by the abrupt entrance and action of his lawyer, while Judy also wheeled her chair and raised her eyes inquiringly to the first speaker.

"Just what I asked. Are you ready to start for Haymore Hall by the first train to-morrow morning?" repeated Mr. Will.

"What is the use of your asking that, Walling, when you know there is ever such a law fight to go through first. And even after I have won my suit, as of course I shall win it, there must be writs of ejectment, and the Lord knows what all, before we can get that villain out of my house; for 'possession is nine points of the law,' you know, and

you may depend he will contest the tenth point to the bitter end," said Ran.

"Not at all!" heartily exclaimed Will Walling; "there will be no fight. The fellow will not fight; he'll fly. And though 'possession is nine points of the law,' he has never had possession. What do you think of that?"

"I think your words are more incomprehensible than ever. I do not understand them in the least," replied Ran.

"Nor do I," added Judy.

"Well, then, listen, both of you. I have been three or four or more hours closeted with Sothoron & Drummond."

"Yes."

"And we have been over, together, all the documentary proofs of your identity as Randolph Hay, the only lawful heir of Haymore."

"Well?"

"Well, every document connected with the case has your name, that is, Randolph Hay, as the heir and now the owner of Haymore."

"Of course."

"And you, and you only, are Randolph Hay."

"Undoubtedly. But there is another who has taken my name and estates."

"He has taken your name and stolen and squandered a good deal of your money during the last few months; there is no doubt about that. Nor will you ever get a penny of that lost money back; there is no hope of that. These moneys he has obtained by fraud from your bailiff, John Prowt, of Haymore, and from your family solicitors, Sothoron & Drummond, at Lincoln's Inns Fields. But, my dear sir, for all that, he has never been in possession of your estate."

"Why not, when——"

"But he is not Randolph Hay, in whose name all the documents are made out."

"But he is at Haymore Hall now. And it will require a legal process to get him out, for he will fight every inch of the ground."

"Not at all! He is not at Haymore Hall, nor has he ever been there. His fraudulent presence is not known there. If he were there now, or ever had been there, or if his person were known there under his stolen name of Randolph Hay,

then, I grant you, in that case we might have to meet some trouble and confusion, yet not much. And as it is, we shall have no trouble at all."

"But this is strange. How is it that he has never been to Haymore?" inquired Ran.

"Because, it seems, he prefers to squander the revenues of the estate in Paris. But let me tell you what I have this afternoon learned of the fellow from Messrs. Sothoron & Drummond."

"Yes, pray do," said Judy.

"It seems, then, that when he first brought his—lady over here, he intended to go to Haymore, and even had grand preparations made there for their reception; but from some caprice, he changed his mind and went to Paris, where he has been with his—lady ever since, squandering money just as if he knew it did not belong to him, and deferring his return from time to time, and drawing large sums from—your bankers."

"From what I know of Gentleman Geff, I should think it hard to draw him from the saloons of Paris to the seclusion of a Yorkshire country house," said Ran.

"Yes; but now it seems he is really coming with a party of friends to spend Christmas at Haymore Hall. He has sent down orders for the house to be prepared to receive himself and—lady and guests by the fifteenth. Now then, the servants at the Hall are preparing to receive Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay, whom they have never seen. Now you and your wife are Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay."

"Well, what do you advise?" inquired Ran.

"Why, man alive, your course is as plain as daylight. You and your wife take the first train to-morrow and speed to Yorkshire and to Haymore Hall, where you will arrive early in the evening, where you will, no doubt, find everything ready for you and be joyfully received by your servants. To be sure, you will arrive rather earlier than you were expected; but that will not matter much, especially as it will give you time to get well rested before you will be called upon to receive Gentleman Geff and his distinguished party."

"Oh, that will be the most delicious fun!" exclaimed Judy, clapping her hands with glee; "and we will have, besides Ran and myself, Mike, Dandy and Longman all

drawn up in a line to welcome him. He will think all Grizzly Gulch has come to Haymore Hall."

"For his guilty soul it would seem

" 'Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.' "

said Will Walling.

"There would be an awful row," exclaimed Ran.

"Not at all. There would be a surprise, a panic and a flight. That is, if you let the villain go. I am not sure that you ought not to have a warrant and an officer ready to arrest him. Or rather, I am sure that you ought."

"I would rather not, if he will leave quietly," said Ran.

"But you must make no terms with a criminal. That would be 'compounding a felony,' a serious offense against English law."

"Well, is it settled? Shall we go to-morrow morning?" inquired Judy.

"Yes, dear; certainly," replied Ran.

"And I will go down to the office and find a Bradshaw and see about our train," said Mr. Will, picking up his hat and hurrying out of the room.

He had scarcely disappeared when the door opened and Mike, Dandy and Longman entered the parlor.

Judy ran forward to welcome them, while Ran turned up the gas.

"We have been sitting in the dark to watch the scene in the square below," Judy explained.

"Well, boys, have you found comfortable quarters?" inquired Ran, as soon as they were all seated.

"Illigant; and chape enough, too, be the same token, close by in the Strand; a very ginteel, dooble-bidder bidroom. Longman, being av a giant fit for a circus, do hev one bid all to himsilf. And Dandy and me, being av little fellows, do have the ithir to oursilves," Mike explained.

While they were still talking Mr. Will Walling returned to the room with a Bradshaw in his hand. He greeted the three visitors pleasantly, dropped into a chair and said:

"Well, there is a train that leaves Euston Square Station at six in the morning and reaches Chuxton at three in the afternoon. After that there is no other parliamentary train until twelve noon, which would make it nine in the evening

when it stops at Chuxton, and would be too late to go on to Haymore the same night."

"Oh, then, we will leave by the earlier train, if Judy has no objection," said Ran.

"I? Why, I never minded getting up early!" exclaimed Judy.

"What do you say, boys?" inquired Ran.

"The sooner the better for us, sir," replied Dandy, speaking for the rest, who promptly assented.

And then, as the hour was late, the visitors bade good-night, and the party left behind separated and retired to rest, to be ready for their early rising.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT HAYMORE HALL

THE whole party were up in the double darkness of a London winter morning before sunrise. They dressed and breakfasted by gaslight, and then entered a large carriage and drove to Euston Square Railway Station, where they were met by Mike, Dandy and Longman.

"Had you not better telegraph to your housekeeper before we start to let her know that we shall certainly be at Haymore to-night so that there may be no mistake, and she will be sure to have beds aired, fires built and dinner ready for us when we get there?" suggested Mr. Walling, who was always directly on the lookout for his own personal comforts, and, incidentally, for those of others.

Ran immediately acted on the suggestion, saying, when he rejoined his friends after sending the dispatch:

"She will think the message comes from the other fellow in Paris and that he is in London on his way to Haymore."

"She will think, or rather she will see, that the telegram comes from Mr. Randolph Hay, and that will be enough," replied Mr. Walling.

"When the other fellow comes on the fifteenth with his friends and finds us in possession—— Well! I can't help anticipating a rink, a circus, a hippodrome, a spectacular

drama, an earthquake, a conflagration and the day of judgment all rolled into one!" said Randolph, with a laugh.

"And there will be nothing of the sort. Only at most a panic and a total rout. Come, we must take our seats," exclaimed Will Walling, as he led the way to the waiting train, where a guide showed them into the middle compartment of a first-class carriage.

Mike, Dandy and Longman had taken tickets for the second class.

"Now is it not too bad that Ran cannot get our friends in here with us, Mr. Walling?" demanded Judy, as she settled herself in the luxurious corner front seat of their compartment and noticed that there were just six seats.

"My dear Judy," muttered Ran, "your brother and his companions are able to take these three vacant seats with us if they please, but for prudential and very praiseworthy reasons they choose to economize and take the second class. I could not offer them a worse offense than invite them to take these seats at my expense."

"Well, I do think there is a great deal of false pride in the world," Judy pouted.

"So there is, darling; but we cannot cure it."

"It is a wonder their high mightinesses consent to go with you to Haymore and be your guests there."

"That is a different affair."

"I don't see that it is."

"But they do," laughed Ran.

The train started, and the conversation dropped.

It was still in the darkness before day that they left the station and sped off into the open country, where the world was scarcely beginning to wake up. In London the world seems never to go to sleep.

Our three travelers had had but little rest in the last twenty-four hours; and so, between the darkness of the hour, the motion of the train and their own weariness, they dozed off into dreamland, where they lingered some hours, until they were called back by the sudden stopping of the train, for an instant only, for before they were fully awake it was off again, flying northward as if pursued by the furies.

Judy shook herself up and looked out of the window on

her right hand to see the eastern horizon red with the coming of the wintry sun above the moorland.

At noon they reached Liverpool, where they left their seats, got lunch and then changed their train for the Great Northern for York.

Late in the afternoon they entered the great cathedral city, where again they left their seats, took tea and a little later took train for Chuxton.

It was nearly sunset when they came to the end of their railway journey at the little market town.

There was no carriage waiting to take them to Haymore.

And then it occurred to Ran for the first time that by some strange oversight no carriage had been ordered by him or his attorney to come from the Hall to meet them at the station.

There were several vehicles around the place, but all seemed to be engaged by other parties.

Our friends walked together to the Tawny Lion Tavern, where Ran ordered refreshment and inquired for a conveyance to Haymore.

The Tawny Lion boasted but one—a large carryall drawn by two stout horses—but that was then engaged, and would not be available to our travelers for perhaps two hours.

These were passed by Ran and Judy, after they had finished their meal, in sauntering about the quaint, old-fashioned town and making acquaintance with its streets and houses.

“Here’s where we shall have to come to do our country shopping, you know, darling,” said Ran; “for I have been told that there is but one general shop at Haymore, where, though they keep everything to sell, from a second-hand pulpit to a soup dish, you can get nothing very good.”

“But I shall encourage the home trade, and deal at Haymore all the same,” replied Judy.

Meanwhile Mr. Will Walling spent his time of waiting over the fire in the inn parlor, with a bottle of port wine and a stack of cigars on the table beside him.

And Longman, accompanied by his shadows, Dandy and Mike, walked out in the direction of the Old Heath Farm to make inquiries about his mother, and, naturally, the nearer he came to the scene of his boyhood’s home the keener and the more intense became his anxiety. It had never

seemed to him that his buxom, healthy, hearty mother could have sickened and died; nor had it seemed more than barely possible that she might have married again. He rather hoped to find her where he had left her five years before, living on the farm. Still, as he turned from the Chuxton highroad and went into a narrow lane, overhung by the branches of the leafless trees that grew on each side the path leading to the farmhouse, all the dread possibilities of life seemed to threaten him ahead. He could not now speak of his feelings. He hurried on. The giant was as weak as a child when he passed through the farm yard and went up to the house. A man was approaching from another direction.

Longman leaned against the side of the house for support as he faltered forth a question.

"Eh?" demanded the farmer, looking fixedly at the stranger, as if he suspected him of being top heavy through too much drink. "Is it the Widow Longman ye're asking about? No, she dun not bide here now. She hasn't been here for these five years past."

Another faint, almost inaudible question from the weak giant, which the farmer had to bend his quick, sharp ear to hear at all.

"Is she living, do you arsk? Oh, ay, she's living good enough. She's keeping house for the parson at the rectory, Haymore, about ten miles to the norrard of this."

"I thank the Lord!" ejaculated Longman, lifting his cap, almost overcome by the sudden collapse of highly strung nerves.

"See here, my man, what's the matter with you? You look to be used up! I thought it was drink when I first saw you. But now I see it isn't. You look to be faint for want of drink, not heavy from too much of it. Come in now and take a mug o' beer, home brewed. 'Twill do ye good," urged the farmer.

"No, thank you. No, really. You are very kind, but I must get on," said Longman, rising, and now that his tension of anxiety was relieved, gaining life with every breath he drew.

"I wouldn't wonder now if you was that son o' hern who went to sea long years ago and never was heerd on since?" said the farmer, calling after him.

"Yes, I am her son, and I am going to Haymore now to find her. Thank you, and good-day to you," said Longman.

"I'm dogged glad on it! One widdy's heart will sing for joy this night, anyhow! Well, good-day, and good luck to you, my lad!" were the last words of the kind-hearted farmer.

When Longman rejoined his two friends, who he had left waiting for him at the farm gate, his happy face told the "glad tidings" before his tongue could speak them.

"Hooray! It's good news ye're after hearing!" cried Mike, throwing up his cap and catching it.

"Yes, I thank the Lord!" replied Longman reverently.

And then, as they walked down the lane and out upon the highroad leading to Chuxton, Longman told them all that he had heard from the farmer.

"So she's housekeeper at the rectory itself! That's where your niece, Miss Julia, will be at service, Mr. Quin!" exclaimed Mike; "that is, if she's not married," he added.

"Or dead, poor wench!" sighed old Dandy.

"Oh, bother that! Nobody's dead, or going to die just yet, is there, Samson, man?"

"I hope not, Mike."

"Anyways, we shall hear when we get to Haymore. Yes, that is so," said Dandy, with an air of resignation.

He was not nearly so anxious to hear from his niece as Longman had been to get news of his mother. He did not, indeed, care much about her now, whatever he might come to care after he should have renewed his acquaintance with her.

When they reached Chuxton and turned into the street leading to the "Tawny Lion," they saw the huge carryall drawn up before the door, with a crowd of idlers, mostly boys, gathered around it to see it start.

Longman and his companions went into the parlor, where they found the Hays and Will Walling waiting for them.

"Why have you stayed for us, Mr. Hay? This is really too kind!" said Longman.

"Kind to myself, friend! I did not want to go without you. Even if I had, Judy would not have allowed it. I see by your face that you have good news of your mother. I congratulate you," said Ran, offering his hand.

"Yes, sir, thank Heaven!" replied the hunter. And then

in a few words, as they walked to the carryall, he told all he heard at the farm.

"That is splendid!" exclaimed Judy with enthusiasm, as she was lifted into the carryall by Ran and placed in the sheltered back seat.

"Dandy must sit back there with you, darling. He is old, and then the drive over the moor will be a very cold one. You won't mind it, will you, Judy?" he inquired, as he settled her among the cushions and tucked her fur cloak well around her feet.

"Why, no, of course not. Especially if you will sit right in front of me so I can lean my head forward on your shoulder sometimes," Judy replied.

Then Ran helped Dandy in and made him sit by Judy. The others followed.

Ran and Will Walling sat immediately in front of Judy and Dandy.

Mike and Longman on the third seat forward. The driver, a stout Yorkshireman, on the box.

The strong draught horses started at a moderate pace, such as might well be kept up during the whole journey across the moor.

It was a dark, cold night, and the two glass lanterns, fixtures, on each side above the driver's seat, did little better than make "darkness visible." But the road was as safe as a road by night could be, and the horses knew it as well as they knew the way to their own cribs.

Two hours of jog trot, safe and steady driving brought them to a great mass of dense shadows, like black mountains and forests against a dark gray northern sky.

The driver drew up his horses before this mystery and announced that they had reached the great wall of Haymore Park.

"How far from the lodge gates?" inquired Ran.

"About half a mile, sir."

"Drive on then."

"If you please, Mr. Hay, I would like to leave the carryall at the point nearest Haymore hamlet and rectory," said Longman.

"Of course! Of course! Naturally you must hasten first of all to your dear mother. But remember, friend, you are

my guest at the Hall, and bring your mother also if you can persuade her to come," heartily responded Ran.

"Yes, do, Mr. Longman. And I will go to see your mother just as soon as ever I can," warmly added Judy.

"I thank you both very much," replied Longman, but he gave no promise.

"Remember, Longman, that you saved my life. But for you—under the Divine Providence," said Ran, reverently lifting his hat, "I should not be here now."

"No, nor I, either, for that matter," added Judy.

"We both owe you a debt that we can never repay, Longman," said Ran, with emotion.

"Never, except in love and gratitude. And we would like to put 'a body' in our sentiments to make them 'felt,' Mr. Longman. You will come and stay with us at the house, will you not?" pleaded Judy.

"You make too much of my service, a service that any man worthy of the name would have done for any other. I do not know what my plain old mother would say to you."

"I am plain myself," said Judy; "a child of the people. Less than that, for I never knew father or mother—a child of the planet only! My only worth is being the wife of my dear Ran here!"

"Yes, madam, you are the wife of Mr. Randolph Hay, of Haymore. You are the lady of the manor. And in this country a social abyss divides you and yours from me and mine as deep, as impassable as that 'great gulf' that lay between Dives and Lazarus," said Longman solemnly.

"It is not so! It shall not be so! I will not have it! Nothing but the will of Heaven shall divide us from our dear friends!" said Judy passionately.

"No!" added Ran with earnest emphasis. "No social gulf shall separate us, Longman, dear old boy!"

"Here we be at the lodge gates, sir. And this is the nearest point we pass to the rectory. We turn in here to go by the elm avenue up to the Hall. And the road continues right straight on under the park wall up to the rectory and the church, which is on the other side of the road," the driver explained, drawing up.

"Well, Longman, I should like you to go on to the house

and dine with us, but I know it would be wrong to ask you," said Ran, as the hunter got up to leave the carryall.

"I will see you early in the morning, sir," said the giant. And then he shook hands all around, jumped from the carryall and strode on up the road to the rectory on that visit to his mother which we have already described.

A woman came out of the porter's lodge on the right-hand side, swung open both broad leaves of the gate and stood courtesying as the carryall rolled through.

"The old porter's daughter—a worthy dame," said the driver, in answer to a question from Ran.

The carriage rolled on through an avenue shaded by great oaks, whose branches, however, were now bare. In the turns of this drive they caught glimpses of the house through the trees, with lights sparkling here and there from the many windows into the darkness.

After several sweeping turns the avenue passed in front of the house, and the carriage drew up before a huge, oblong gray building, with turrets at each corner, bay windows on the first floor and balconies above.

As the carriage stopped the hall door was flung wide, and several men and women servants appeared in the lighted hall.

The butler stood in the door. Two footmen came down the steps to attend their master and mistress.

Ran lifted Judy from the carriage, whispering:

"Welcome home, my darling," and led her up the steps and into the hall, followed by his friends.

The butler, with a low bow, made way for them to pass.

The housekeeper, a very aged woman, dressed in a brown satin gown and a lace cap, came forward to meet them.

"Welcome home, sir and madam. We have waited for you long, and greet you gladly," she said in a tone of exaggerated reverence and with a deep courtesy.

Ran held out his frank hand, and Judy said:

"Thank you, Mrs.—Mrs——"

"Basset, madam, and been in the family all my life, as mother and father were before me. Your old butler, sir, is my son, getting older every day, but not yet past service, either of us, I thank Heaven. Will you go to your room now, madam?"

"Yes, if you please," said Judy. "I would like to take off my bonnet and cloak."

Mrs. Basset looked all around, and then said:

"I do not think that your maid has come in yet. Shall I send one of the men out to hurry her? I suppose she is busy with the parcels in the carriage."

"I—I—I—have no maid—yet," replied Judy, blushing deeply, for she was rather afraid of this fine ruin of an old-time housekeeper, even though the aged woman was evidently falling a little into her second childhood.

"Oh, I see! I beg your pardon, ma'am. You will be waiting to take some good girl from the estate. That has been the way with the ladies of Hay from time immemorial." She paused suddenly in her babble and looked fixedly, though still very respectfully, at Mr. Hay.

Now Ran was just a little sensitive about his personal appearance. He was not a handsome, soldierly blond, but a beautiful, dark brunette; graceful as a leopard, sinuous as a serpent. He was in the habit of humorously stigmatizing himself as "a little nigger." So when the aged housekeeper regarded him with her wistful gaze, he thought she was saying to herself, how little like he was to any of the Hays. He laughed a little and said:

"You do not find much resemblance in me to my tall and fair forefathers, Mrs. Basset."

"Sir," she replied solemnly, "you are the living image of your honored grandmother."

The young man burst out laughing, and was joined by Mike and Judy.

But their mirth ceased as the aged housekeeper added:

"She died at twenty-three years old. She was the best, the brightest and the most beautiful being that my eyes ever beheld! And, yes, she died at twenty-three years old! And you are her living image, as nearly as it is possible for a gentleman to be. That was the reason why I looked at you so, sir. I beg your pardon; I forgot myself."

"Don't speak of it, Mrs. Basset," said Ran kindly.

"Thank you, sir. You can see the portrait in the picture gallery to-morrow and judge for yourself—or even to-night if you will," said the housekeeper.

"Thank you; not to-night; we are too tired. To-morrow you shall show us over the whole house, if you will."

"That I will with pride and pleasure, sir. And now, madam, shall I attend you to your room?"

"Thank you, yes, please," said Judy; and she followed her conductress up the broad staircase to a vast upper hall.

The housekeeper opened a door near the head of the stairs and admitted her charge into a spacious, sumptuous bed-chamber, upholstered in ebony and old gold, and in which burned a fine open coal fire.

The aged woman, much against Judy's will, insisted upon waiting upon her; took off her heavy cloak and hat and hung them in the wardrobe, drew a luxurious easy-chair to the fire and seated her in it, and hovered around her with affectionate attentions until Mr. Hay came in, when, with one of her quaint courtesies, she withdrew from the room.

Again Ran took Judy in his arms, folded her to his heart, kissed her fondly and welcomed her home.

"And to-morrow, my darling, we shall have to prepare to welcome Gentleman Geff and his—lady. I shall send in the morning for Mr. Campbell and his daughter, that the villian may be confronted with his wronged wife, as well as his betrayed friend," said Ran, as he gave his arm to Judy to take her down to the dining-room, where dinner waited.

CHAPTER XIX

WAITING THE ISSUE

IN the morning Ran and Judy woke up to look, for the first time, by daylight on their new home.

Ran opened the windows and let in the light of the December day upon their bedchamber, a vast, peaceful, slumberous room, upholstered throughout in olive green and gold, and looking out upon a park, full of sunny glades and shady groves, even now in winter when the light of day shone down on burnished dry grass in the glades and ever-green trees in the groves.

The young couple, though lord and lady of the Manor of Haymore, had as yet neither valet nor maid. So Ran rang no bell, but from a hodful of coal at the chimney

corner, with his own hand, replenished the fire in the grate and then went to make his toilet.

Judy lay still, with her eyes looking through the large windows on two sides of the spacious chamber, out upon the sunny and shady park until Ran had finished dressing and left the room. Then she arose and took her bath and opened her large sea trunk to find a dress suitable for her morning wear.

She finally selected a plain suit of dark gray velveteen, with crimped linen ruffles at the throat and wrists. She put it on and went downstairs.

In the hall below she found the wide doors open in front, admitting the winter sunshine, and a great coal fire burning in the broad fireplace in the back; and between the two, near the front of the stairs, Ran, Will Walling, Mike and Dandy standing in conversation.

Dandy was the spokesman.

"I did think," he was saying, "that Longman would have come back last night to bring me news of Julie. But, Lord, I do suppose he got so wrapped up into his mother that he clean forgot me and mine, or else, maybe, he could not well get away."

"That was it, Dandy," said Ran.

"Same time, if, as how I had thought it might be so, myself would have gone to the rectory with him. And 'deed I'd a-gone, anyhow, only I didn't like to be intruding into a strange place."

"I can't understand," said Will Walling, speaking for the first time, "how you fortune-seekers can bear to stay away for years from your native country without hearing a word from any of your friends at home, and then, when you make up our mind to return, and once set foot in your native land, you straightway get into a fever of anxiety and impatience to meet them."

"No more do I, but so it is!" confessed Dandy.

"Yis," added Mike. "Sure it was the very same wid Mister Longman himself when he was gitting nigh onto the ould farrum where he left his mother. It is curious."

"You see, if I only knowed she were alive and well," said Dandy apologetically.

"Oh, you may be sure of that," cheerfully exclaimed Ran, "but I don't think she is at the rectory."

"Why don't you then, sir?" inquired Dandy.

"Because if she had been Longman would have seen her and told her about you, and she would certainly have run over last night or early this morning to see you."

"So she would! So she would! And yet I dunno—I dunno! Even darters in these days ain't none too dutiful to feythers, let alone nieces to uncles, 'specially when they've been parted twenty years," said Dandy, shaking his bald head.

"I don't think she is at the rectory, or, under the circumstances, she would have run over here to see you," said Ran.

"I dunno! I dunno!"

"It is most likely she is married and away."

"Or dead and buried, poor wench," sighed Dandy.

"Come, come, don't be so downhearted. Longman will be here soon. He promised to come early this morning, and no doubt he will bring good news of your niece. Now here is Judy, and we will go in to our breakfast," concluded Ran.

Judy, stepping from the bottom stair to the hall floor, greeted Will Walling, Mike and Dandy with a cordial good-morning and led the way to the breakfast room.

It was just under the bedchamber Judy had left, and had the same outlook from windows on the east and north of sunny glades, of burnished dry grass and shady groves of Scotch firs.

The table was laid for five, and the old butler was in attendance; not that His Importance, Mr. Basset, the butler, ever waited at any other meal except dinner, and then only at the sideboard; but on this particular occasion of the first breakfast of the bridal pair at Haymore he thought proper to volunteer his attendance in their honor.

The consequence was that Mike, Dandy and even Judy were almost afraid to speak, lest they should expose their ignorance of high life to this imposing personage.

The five sat down to table under the cloud of the butler's greatness.

But soon the fragrant Mocha, the luscious waffles and the savory venison steaks and other appetizing edibles combined to dispel the gloom and enliven their spirits.

After breakfast Judy sent for the housekeeper, and claimed her promise to show them through the building.

Mrs. Basset was only too willing to oblige. The five friends, led by their conductress, went first up the grand staircase that led from the lower to the upper halls on every floor to the top of the house.

"We had better go to the top first, ma'am, while we are fresh, else we might find the stairs hard to climb," said Mrs. Basset.

And Judy, as she knew that the old woman spoke chiefly in the interests of her own infirmities, answered promptly:

"You know best, Mrs. Basset. Suit yourself, and you will suit us."

They went upstairs to the low-ceiled rooms under the roof, which Mrs. Basset described as servants' bedrooms—storerooms for furniture out of season, boxes, etc.

Then to the next below, all extra bedrooms, and to the next below that, all family suites of apartments; and down to the next, on which were the long drawing and the ball-room, which, with the broad hall between them, took up the whole flat.

Lastly, they came down to the first floor, on which were the long dining-room, the breakfast room, the parlor, the library and the picture gallery, which was the last place to be inspected.

The family portraits were arranged in chronological order, beginning with the Saxon ancestor of the eighth century, who, with rudest arms and in rudest clothing, resisted the first invasion of the Danes, and whose "counterfeit presentment" here was probably but the work of the rough artist's imagination, executed, or rather perpetrated, at a much later date.

Then in regular order came the barons who had rallied around Hereward in his last desperate stand against the usurper, William of Normandy; the iron-clad knights who had followed Richard of the Lion heart to the Holy Land; the barons who had taken up arms in support of the House of York against that of Lancaster; the plumed cavaliers who had insanely flocked with all their retainers to the standard of the Stuarts in every mad attempt of that unhappy family to regain their lost throne; periwig-pated courtiers of the Georgian dynasty; and, lastly, the swallow-

tail coated and patent-leather booted gentlemen of the Victorian age, as represented by the late squire and his three sons.

The ladies of the chiefs were all there, too, each by the side of her "lord," and dressed in costume of her time, or in what was supposed to be such, for there is little doubt that many of the earlier portraits were merely fancy pictures.

Before the group of the late squire and his family Judy suddenly caught her breath and clasped her hands and stood stock-still, gazing on the full-length picture of a beautiful dark girl.

"It is like, isn't it now, ma'am?" inquired the housekeeper.

"Like! Why, the picture might be taken for his portrait if it were not for the dress!" exclaimed Judy, gazing at her husband.

"It is still more like my Cousin Palma," said Ran.

"Why, so it is," assented Judy; "and does not need change of dress to make it perfect. The hair of that lady in the picture is worn exactly as Palma wears hers, and that costume of dark blue is not unlike the dress Palma wore to our wedding in color and make."

"It is indeed a wonderful likeness to Mrs. Stuart," remarked Mr. Walling. "Who is the lady?" he demanded, turning to the housekeeper.

"The last Mrs. Hay, of Haymore, the grandmother of the young squire here. She died at the age of twenty-three, leaving three boys, of one, two and three years of age—to give the figures in round numbers," replied Mrs. Basset.

"Yes, I know she was the wife of the late squire; but whose daughter was she?" persisted Will Walling.

The housekeeper was silent.

"Faix, Misther Walling, is it in the coorthouse ye are, with Misthress Basset intil the witness box, that ye would be cross-examining herself?" demanded Mike.

Will Walling turned a deprecating, apologetic glance upon Ran, who quietly replied:

"She was the daughter of a gypsy chief. Her name was Gentyl Tuinquer."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Will. Then, feeling rather un-

comfortable, he added, to cover his confusion. "How beautiful she must have been!"

"And how much more beautiful she must be now!" exclaimed Judy.

The lawyer stared at her.

"Up there in heaven, I mean; for, of course, she is in heaven, for you may see by her face how good she is," added Judy.

The housekeeper sighed. All the ladies of the long line of Hays had been "angel born" before this gypsy girl from the tents came into the family. And though the woman could not help loving the memory of the lovely young creature, she equally could not help suffering in her own pride at any mention of the gypsy birth.

Ran kissed the hand of the pictured lady and then turned with his party to leave the gallery.

On stepping out into the hall a footman met him, and with a respectful salute said:

"If you please, sir, there is—a—person waiting to see you."

"A person? Who? What sort of a person?" demanded Ran.

"A foreign-looking tall man, sir; might be a Patagonian, only he can speak English."

"Show him in here." And with these words Ran crossed the hall and entered a morning parlor on the same floor. Then looking back he saw that, though his footman had gone on his errand, his friends lingered in the hall.

"Come in, all of you. It is only Longman. You will all want to see him, especially will Mr. Quin."

"I do want to see him. Yes, that is so," assented Dandy, as they all followed Ran into the parlor, where they found quite a variety of comfortable chairs.

They were scarcely seated when Longman entered.

Ran sprang up and met him; but Dandy pushed between them, his round, bald head, as well as his face, glowing red with excitement as he demanded:

"Have you seen my Juley? Is she well and happy? Is she still in the service of the minister?"

"She is well and happy, but no longer in service anywhere. She is married to John Legg, the greengrocer of your native village, Medge. So I have not had the pleasure

of making her acquaintance," Longman replied, with a laugh.

"The Lord above us! Well, I did sort of hope she was an old-maid woman as would have been a housekeeper and a daughter to myself in my old days. Well, and now she is married, and, I do dare say, with a baker's dozen of children. Yes, that is so," said Dandy, with a heavy sigh.

"No, but it isn't so. She only married a few months ago, when she was over forty years old, and John Legg, the widower, who took her for his second wife, over fifty; so she has no baker's dozen of children as yet."

"Oh, I's warrant he has a house full o' young uns for her to be stepmother to! And that will be a heap worse than if the wench had a score of her own! It is as bad as if I had found her dead! Yes, that is so," sighed Dandy.

"No, it isn't so. You are all out again. John Legg has no children at home. He has a son and daughter, and gave them both a grand education above his means, and to repay him they did all they could to break his heart. They had worldly ambitions above their state, and despised the calling of their father. The son took 'holy orders,' not for the love of the Lord or the neighbor, but for love of self and the world. He became a professional preacher only, not a minister of religion. Mr. Hay," said the speaker, suddenly turning toward Ran, "I shall presently have something to say to you in reference to this man, in which you have an especial interest."

"Thank you, Longman. I will remember to remind you of it," replied Ran.

"Now will you please go on telling me about the family my niece married into?" said Dandy impatiently.

"Certainly!" smiled Longman, good-humoredly. "The son utterly ignores his father and hangs on the skirts of influential people; but as yet has had but little success. The daughter went out as a governess, less it seems to be of service to children than to seek her own fortune, through her beauty, among the rich and noble. She also ignores her father. Both these hopefuls are 'married and settled,' to use the common phrase. And the newly-wedded, middle-aged couple are alone."

"And what could have tempted my gal to agree and

married of a old widdyman, whose son and darter had showed sich bad blood?"

"Well, to get out of service, perhaps; to have a house and home and a good husband, whom she could love, in this John Legg."

"I don't memorize the name of no John Legg at Medge, though, to be sure, I have been away from them parts for twenty years—yes, that is so!"

"No, you can't remember him. He was not a Medge man. He came from the borough in London about two years ago. After his wife died, broken-hearted, it is said, by the conduct of his children, he sold out his business in London and came down to Medge, where he had a married sister and many nieces and nephews, his only relatives, except his undutiful son and daughter. He had enough to live on in retirement, but could not enjoy himself in idleness. So he took the first chance to go into business again. It happened that the only greengrocer in the place, an aged man, wanted to sell out and go to live with his married daughter, who was the wife of a farmer in the neighborhood."

"More fool he!" exclaimed Dandy. "I saw the play of 'Lear' once."

"But there was a *Cordelia* in it, you know, Dandy!"

"Yes; go on."

"John Legg bought out the old greengrocer, shop, stock, house, furniture and good will. The rectory people dealt with him, as why not when he was the only greengrocer in the village? And so he made the acquaintance of their servant, Julia Quin, and soon proposed to marry her, and as she did not wish to leave Medge and go with the rector and his wife to Haymore, she accepted honest John Legg. And I hear that they make a very comfortable couple."

"How do you know all this here you are a-telling me of so confident like?"

"Because in your interests I made very minute inquiries into all the circumstances, and Mr. Campbell was so good as to give me all the particulars," replied Longman. "And, Dandy, will you let me speak to my other friends—they are waiting, you see?"

"Sartinly, Mr. Longman. Who's a-hindering on you? I myself am going into the town to send a telescope mes-

sage to my niece," replied the old man, and with a low bow, intended for all the company, he turned and left the room.

Ran hastily shook hands with Longman, then leaving him with the others, hurried out after his old friend, whom he found on the drive.

"Dandy! Dandy, I say! Please stop!" he called.

"Well, Mr. Hay, what's your will, sir?" the old fellow demanded, turning to face his host.

"You must not walk into the village. Take the dogcart."

"You are very kind, Mr. Hay, sir; but——"

"I will have my way. Come down with me to the stables. I have not seen them yet. But I know there is a dogcart, because Mr. Walling, who is always wide awake, took a drive in it this morning to get an appetite for his breakfast before we were up," said Ran, as he turned into a footpath leading through the grounds to the rear of the hall, far behind which were the stables.

Dandy followed him, if the truth is to be told, not unwilling to spare his old limbs by riding instead of walking to the village.

The stable yard occupied full a square quarter acre of ground, walled in by massive stone buildings, consisting of stables proper, carriage houses, harness rooms, coachman's and groom's quarters and kennels.

It was full of activity on this morning; for all the four-legged creatures there, horses and hounds, seemed spoiling for a run, and were venting their impatience of restraint—the horses by neighing and kicking and the hounds by howling and scratching.

"Yo' ought to have a good hunting party of gentlemen down here for a few weeks, sir, to take the devil out of the brutes," said the old head groom, touching his hat to his master.

"All in good time—a—— Tell me your name."

"Hobbs, sir, at your sarvice."

"Well, Hobbs, if you have a steady-going horse, have him put to a dogcart, and find a careful boy to drive Mr. Quin to the village."

"Yes, sir. Old Dick will be the hoss and Young Sandy the driver. I'll go and give the order."

The groom went across the yard on his errand, while Ran and Dandy walked off to the kennels to look at the dogs.

"Not one on 'em to be compared to your Tip or my Lion, Mr. Hay, in my poor opinion!" said Dandy.

"These cannot excel ours in courage, or affection, or fidelity, I am sure," replied Ran.

And both men gave deep sighs to the memory of the faithful creatures they had been compelled by circumstances to leave behind them at the fort, where, it is true, the two dogs were sure of the kindest treatment from their new owners—Surgeon Hill, who had adopted Tip, and Adjutant Rose, who had taken Lion.

"Do you think we will ever see them again, Mr. Hay?"

"Yes, I do. In this world or the next."

"The next! Mr. Hay, sir!"

"Why not? I believe the creature that once lives, lives forever. Especially the creature capable of love, courage, fidelity and self-sacrifice, as so many of the quadrupeds are, must be immortal."

What Dandy would have said in reply was arrested on his lips by the approach of the dogcart, driven by one of the under-grooms.

Ran helped his old friend upon the seat, tucked the rug well over his knees and then inquired:

"Where do you wish to go?"

"To the telescope office in the village."

"Drive this gentleman to the telegraph office," said Ran.

"Beg pardon, sir; but there is no telegraph office in the village, and none nearer than Chuxton," said the young groom, touching his hat.

"Oh! Chuxton is ten miles off! Where we left the train last night you know, Mr. Quin," said Ran.

"Yes, I know! Well, let him drive me there, then! That is if you can spare the carriage."

"Of course I can! All day, if you want it."

"'Cause, you see, I don't feel aquil to traveling all the way back to the south of England, after having come all the way up to the north, and I do want to see my niece very bad. And I mean to send a telescope as will be sartin to fetch her. Yes, that is so."

"Very well, then. Drive to Chuxton telegraph office, and then wherever Mr. Quin wishes to go. You are at his orders."

The boy took the reins and drove off, and Ran turned again to question the old groom.

"Has there been much sport about here?"

"None at all, sir. Since the young squire were killed, the old squire never had no heart for nothing as long as he lived."

"Ah! How are the preserves?"

"Well, sir, the game is increasing and multiplying to that degree for the want of sporting gents among 'em to thin 'em out, that for once in a way poachers is a blessing."

"Poachers! Why, what is the gamekeeper about, to permit poachers to trespass?"

"Well, sir, there ain't no gamekeeper here, nor likewise been none since the old squire died. The last gamekeeper went off to Australia to seek his fortune."

"Thank Heaven!" breathed Ran with fervency, not loud but deep, that now he could put his friend in office without hurting any one's feelings.

"You see, it was this a way, sir. When Kirby went to foreign parts, the old squire was too ill to be bothered about his successor, and after he died the place was left without one. But surely, sir, Mr. Prowt wrote to you about all these matters, for he sartinly told me as you had wrote back how you would wait till you come down here in person to see the place before you would appoint aither gamekeeper or coachman."

"What! has the coachman gone too?"

"Surely, sir, Mr. Prowt wrote and told you that, too! He left to better himself, so he said—took sarvice along of the Duke of Ambleton."

"What wages do you get as groom here, Hobbs?"

"Head groom, sir, and twenty pund a year and my keep, and bin in the famberly, man and boy, fifty years, and hope to continuat in it for fifty more, I was gwine to say, but anyways as long as I can work, and that will be as long as I live, for I'd scorn to retire."

"Excellent, Hobbs. Have you a family?"

"Wife, sir, keeping house for me in the cottage there," said the old man, pointing to a little stone cottage built in the wall next the stable, "and one son, sir—boy that driv the dogcart. Steady lad, sir, though his feyther says it; and

one darter, sir, upper housemaid at the Hall—good girl, sir.”

“You are blessed in your family, Hobbs.”

“Thanks be to Heaven, sir!”

“Now, then, you said your wages as head groom were twenty pound a year. How much did the coachman get?”

“Just twice as much, sir, forty pound a year, and a good sound house over his head, and his livery and his beer. And left all that, sir, for ten pund more, and gold lace on his coat, and the honor of driving a duke. May the de’il fly away with him!—begging your pardon, sir.”

“Don’t mention it,” laughed Ran. “But you would not have left Haymore under the same circumstances?”

“Me!—why, sir, I never had the chance, so what would be the use of boasting? But, indeed, I don’t think I would.”

“Hobbs, can you drive?”

“None better in the world, sir, though I say it.”

“Then you shall be my coachman at the same wages that your predecessor now gets from his new master,” said Ran, smiling benignly down on the stupefied face of the man before him.

“Oh, sir! sir! but this is too much, too much for poor me! Such a permotion as to be coachman! I can hardly believe it, sir! I can’t, indeed! And at a rise of wages, too! I can’t hardly believe it!” droned Hobbs, fairly dazed by his good fortune.

“Go and tell your wife, then. And begin to see about your livery, and fix up the coachman’s cottage—at my cost, Hobbs. All that will help you to believe it. Good-day.”

With these words the gracious young master left the stable yard and walked back to the Hall, happy in the feeling of having made others so, yet grave and thoughtful in the recognition of his responsibilities for all who were dependent on him.

CHAPTER XX

THE NEW RECTOR

WHEN Ran entered the morning room, where he had left his friends, he found them all there, but now gathered in

a wide circle around the glowing sea coal fire in the large open grate, listening to Longman, who was giving a detailed account of his visit to the rectory and his evening with his mother.

Ran drew a chair, sat down among them and made one of the audience.

When the speaker had finished his story Ran turned to him and said:

"Now, Longman, if you are ready you may tell me what you meant when you said that you had something to report in reference to that undutiful son of worthy John Legg," said Ran.

"Yes, sir. He has taken 'holy orders,' the more effectually to serve the devil, I fear. And he has been appointed by his brother-in-law to the living of Haymore parish, worth six hundred pounds, besides the rectory and glebe—all of which is in your gift, Mr. Hay."

"Indeed! And who the mischief is the gentleman's brother-in-law?" demanded Ran.

"Who but the fraudulent claimant of Haymore? Gentleman Geff, or whatever his real name may be?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Ran, drawing his breath hard. "The plot seems to thicken! So the deceived wife of our Gentleman Geff, the young lady upon whom we have all wasted so much sympathy, is really no other than the pretty adventuress who left her father to seek her fortune! But I think we heard of her as Lamia Leegh."

"Well," said Longman, "it would appear that when brother and sister left honest John Legg, their shopkeeping father, they must have changed the spelling of their names from plain Legg to mystic Leegh. The latter has a more aristocratic sound, you know. At any rate, their name was Legg; yet you heard of the girl as Leegh, and certainly the letter of the man to Mr. Campbell was signed Leegh—Cassius Leegh."

"What did the fellow write to Mr. Campbell about?"

"Oh, to warn him to leave the rectory, as he himself had been appointed to the living and should enter upon his office in January, after which he should not require the assistance of a curate."

"In-deed!" again exclaimed Ran. "I think the fraudu-

lent claimant is giving away the Haymore patronage in a very reckless way!"

Longman laughed.

"Let us see now how the case stands. The plot thickens so fast that it requires a little clearing. The Rev. Mr. Campbell was called to Haymore to fill the pulpit of the late Dr. Orton during the absence of the latter at Cannes, and remains in the office at a low salary until a rector is appointed to the living. And my substitute, the fraudulent claimant, has appointed his unworthy brother-in-law, who has warned the good curate to leave. Have I stated the case correctly?"

"Quite so," said Will Walling.

"Very well, then. And we expect the three worthies, Gentleman Geff, Miss Legg and the Rev. Mr. Legg, calling themselves Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay and the Rev. Cassius Leegh, all in full feather, here this evening! We must be prepared for them. Gentleman Geff must be confronted with the wife he deserted and the friend he assassinated. Oh, that Miss Legg might be met by her forsaken father! That is barely possible if John Legg should take the train for Chuxton immediately on the receipt of Dandy's telegram, and come with his wife! And the Rev. Mr. Leegh shall be received by—the rector of Haymore! But that last item necessitates prompt action. Longman, come into the library with me, will you?"

The hunter arose and followed Ran upstairs and into the library, where they sat down at a table on which stood pen, ink and paper.

"Longman," said Ran, "would it suit you to be gamekeeper of Haymore?"

"Why, Mr. Hay, it would make me the happiest man on earth! But I really would not wish you to give me the place at another man's expense."

"Never fear; it will be at no man's expense in the sense you mean. There has been no gamekeeper at Haymore for a year past. The last one left to seek his fortune in Australia, and no successor has yet been appointed. The place is yours if you will have it. Indeed, you would please me much by taking it."

"Indeed, then, I will take it, sir, with many thanks,"

exclaimed the hunter warmly, his whole face glowing with the sincere delight he felt.

"Then that is settled. Get the keys from the bailiff and examine the cottage and have it fitted up for yourself and your mother in the most comfortable manner and send the bills to the bailiff."

"I will, Mr. Hay. You have made me very happy, for my mother's sake as well as my own. We both owe you hearty thanks!"

"Don't speak of thanks again, Longman. The man who saved my life can never owe me thanks for anything that I may have the happiness of doing for him. Now to speak of another matter. Will you kindly take a letter for me to the Rev. Mr. Campbell?"

"Certainly, sir, with great pleasure."

"Take a book, then, or amuse yourself in any way you please, while I write it," said Ran.

Longman arose and roamed about before the bookcases, reading the titles of the imprisoned volumes until he was tired of the amusement. None of the books attracted him. He was not a bookman.

"I have finished my letter now, Longman, if you are ready to take it," said Ran, folding and sealing the note in which he had invited Mr. Campbell to come with his wife and daughter to dine with himself and Mrs. Hay that evening and confer about the reverend gentleman's appointment to the living of Haymore.

"I am quite ready, sir," said Longman, and he took the letter and put it in his breast pocket and left the library.

He had scarcely gone when a footman entered and said:

"If you please, sir, the bailiff, Mr. Prowt, is here, asking to see you."

"Let him come in here," said Ran with a smile.

A moment later the bailiff entered, took off his hat, bowed profoundly to the young squire, and stood waiting.

"Take a seat, Mr. Prowt, if you please. You wished to see me, I am told," said Ran pleasantly, though hardly able to control the smile that lurked in the corners of his eyes and lips.

"Yes, sir," replied the bailiff, sitting down and placing his hat on the floor between his feet.

"Well?" inquired Ran after an awkward pause.

"Well, squire, if there is anything amiss I hope you will excuse it. I really did not expect you down last evening, and made no preparations to meet you. I am told by the head groom that there was no carriage sent to the station at Chuxton."

"It does not matter in the least, Mr. Prowt," said Ran with a boyish twinkle in his eyes that he could not suppress.

"Oh, yes, begging your pardon, squire, but it matters very much. I wish to set myself right with you, sir. I wish to tell you that it was all the neglect and carelessness of them telegraph people in Chuxton not forwarding your dispatch in time. You must, in course, sent it yesterday morning to announce your arrival in the evening, but I never got it until this blessed morning, when I thought that it was this evening you were coming. And I did not know any better until I came over here and stopped at the stable to tell Hobbs to be sure to send the chariot to meet you. And he told me that you were already here—that you had arrived last night. I don't think I ever was so knocked over in my life. And no one to meet you! And no ceremonies befitting the reception of the Squire of Haymore and his bride!"

"It is all right. Don't trouble yourself," said Ran, now laughing outright. "Come and dine with me this evening."

Prowt stared for a moment before answering. Never in the memory of man had a bailiff been invited to dine with a squire of Haymore. Then he reflected that the young heir had been found in America, and that America was a very democratic and republican part of the world, and that would account for the free and easy ways of the new squire. Only the bailiff was afraid Mr. Hav might be going to ask the butler and the head groom to dine with him, also: and that the bailiff could not stand. If he had never dined with the squire, neither had he ever dined with butler or groom. While he hesitated, Ran, misunderstanding his perplexity, said kindly:

"An informal dinner, Prowt. Only the clergyman and his wife and daughter, my solicitor, my brother-in-law, two friends from America, Mrs. Hay and myself."

Prowt drew a deep sigh of relief.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "You do me great honor. When shall I bring my books for your examination?"

"Not this week, Prowt. This is Thursday. No business until Monday."

"Just as you pleases, sir," said the bailiff, picking up his hat and rising.

And without more words he bowed himself out of the library.

Ran went downstairs and rejoined his friends in the morning room, and entertained them with an account of his interview with the bailiff.

"My chief reason for asking him to dinner," concluded the young man, "was that he might be present this evening to assist us in receiving Mr. and Mrs. Gentleman Geff and their esteemed brother and brother-in-law."

At this moment the luncheon bell rang, and the whole party went across the hall to the small dining-room.

CHAPTER XXI

TWO SCENES

COULD any member of the party gathered at Haymore Hall have been gifted with clairvoyance, he or she might have witnessed in succession two scenes on that morning of December the 15th, distant, indeed, in space, but near in interest to the household.

The first scene was in a greengrocer's shop in Holly Street, Medge.

A tall, spare, gray-haired and grave-looking man, of fifty years or upward, stood behind his counter waiting for morning customers, for it was still early.

A blue-coated telegraph boy hurried in, put a blue envelope in his hand, and laid an open book on the counter, saying:

"A dispatch, Mr. Legg; please sign."

The astonished John Legg, who had never received a telegram in the half century of his whole life, and now feared that this one must herald some well-merited misfortune to his unloving and undutiful but beloved son or daughter, nervously scrawled his name in the boy's book and tore open the envelope and read:

"HAYMORE, CHUXTON, YORKSHIRE,
December 15, 18—.

"To MR. JOHN LEGG, Medge, Hantz: I have just come from America; want to see my niece; am not able to travel. Let her come to me immediately. It will be to her advantage.
ANDREW QUIN."

With a gasp of relief that this message was no herald of misfortune, but rather possibly of good fortune, honest John hurried with it into the back parlor, where his wife—a red-cheeked, blue-eyed, brown-haired, buxom woman of forty or more—sat sewing, and said:

"Here, Juley! Read this! What does it mean? Who is Andrew Quin?"

And he thrust the dispatch into her hand.

Her eyes devoured it, and then she answered:

"Why, it is from my dear old Uncle Dandy. He went out to the gold fields in California about twenty years ago, and we have never heard from him since. And now he has just come back, and rich as Croesus, of course! And I am the only relation he has in the whole world! And he wants to see me. And he isn't able to travel. And he may be at death's door, poor, dear old fellow. John Legg, when does the next northbound train stop here?"

"Why, I believe there's a parliamentary stops here at—let me see—nine o'clock," answered the greengrocer, slowly collecting his ideas, that had been scattered by the intense excitement of his wife.

"Then we must go by it!" exclaimed Mrs. Legg, jumping to her feet and beginning immediately to lock up cupboards and set back chairs.

"What!" cried John Legg, aghast at this impetuosity.

"We must go by it, or he may be dead before we get there, and his hospital left to fortunes!" exclaimed Julia in such trepidation that she reversed her words and never perceived that she did so, nor, in his bewilderment, did John.

"But we haven't half an hour to get ready in!" he pleaded.

"We must get ready in less time!" cried Mrs. Legg, turning to run up the stairs that led from one corner of the back room.

"What'll I do about the shop?" called John in dismay.

"Leave it to the boy a day or two," replied Julia from the head of the stairs.

"Everything will go to rack and ruin!" cried the green-grocer.

"John Legg!" demanded his wife, rushing down the stairs fully equipped for the journey with bonnet and big shawl, an umbrella and bag in hand—"do you mean for the sake of a paltry, two-penny-ha'-penny shop, not worth fifty pounds, to risk an immense fortune, that will make you a millionaire, or a silver or a gold king, or a brown answer (bonanza?), or something of the sort?"

"'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' my dear," said the man.

"Jedehiah Judkins, come here and bring your master's overcoat! And, Jed, do you mind the shop well while we are gone, and get Widow Willet's Bob to come and help you, and I'll pay him and give you half a sovereign if we find all right when we come back Saturday night," said Mrs. Legg.

The boy, who had just come in with his empty basket from delivering vegetables about the town, hastened with big eyes into the back room to obey his mistress' orders.

John Legg submitted. He always did. Julia went about fastening doors and windows, and lastly raking out and covering up the fire.

Then leaving only the key of the front door with "the boy," the pair left the house and hurried to the station, where they were just in time to buy their tickets and jump into a second-class carriage. And before John Legg had time to recover his routed and dispersed mental faculties they were whirled halfway to London.

"You are the most energetic woman I ever saw in my life, Julia!" he said, trying to understand the situation.

"Need to be when there is a brown answer fortune, and a silver kingdom, if not a gold one, in the question—yes, and a dear, dying uncle, too!"

"I wonder if the boy will remember to take that celery to the vicarage when the market gardener brings it this afternoon?"

"Oh, bother the celery, and the vicar, too! Think of the silver and gold kingdom—and—yes, of course, the poor, dear, dying uncle!" said Julia. And onward they flew

northward toward Yorkshire, unconscious that they were destined to take a part in a very memorable drama to be enacted at Haymore Hall.

The other scene connected with the same drama, and which the clairvoyant might have looked in upon, was the elegant private parlor at Langham's Hotel, where the counterfeit Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay and the Rev. Mr. Cassius Leegh sat at an early breakfast.

The personal appearance of Gentleman Geff and his "lady" are familiar to our readers. That of the Rev. Cassius Leegh may be described. He resembled his sister. Nature had given him a very handsome form and face, but sin had marred both.

On this morning both men looked bad; their faces were pallid, their eyes red, their hands shaky, their voices husky, their nerves "shattered," their tempers—infernal!

Gentleman Geff had plunged into the gulf of dissipation to drown remorse. And the last two months of lawless deviltry in the French capital had made of him a mental and physical wreck.

His "reverend" brother-in-law was not far above him in the path that leads down to perdition.

Mrs. Gentleman Geff was as well as serene, and as beautiful as it was possible for her to be under her adverse circumstances.

But then, being the woman that she was, she had much to console her. She had come from Paris enriched with India shawls, velvet and satin dresses, laces and jewels which might have been the envy of a duchess.

She wore her traveling suit of navy blue poplin, for they were to take an early train for Yorkshire immediately after breakfast. She performed her duties as hostess at breakfast with perfect self-possession, though often under great provocation.

"When you are settled at the rectory you will, of course, bring down Mrs. Leegh and the children. I am quite longing to make the acquaintance of my sweet sister-in-law and her little ones," said Lamia softly.

"I don't know," sulkily replied her brother. "It's a bad time—in midwinter—to move children from the mild climate of Somerset to the severe one of York."

"Look here!" angrily and despotically exclaimed Gentle-

man Geff. "I won't have it! You've got to bring 'em, climate or no climate, or you're no parson for my parish! It was well enough when you were rollicking and carousing 'round Paris to leave your wife and kids with your father-in-law in Somerset, but when you're settled in Haymore rectory you have got to have 'em with you. It would be deuced disreputable to have you, the pastor of a parish, living in one place and your wife and children in another. And I don't want any reverend reprobates around me, I can tell you that much!"

"You shall have no cause to complain, Mr. Hay," replied Cassius Leegh, controlling his temper and speaking coolly, though his blood was boiling with rage at the insult, for which he would have liked to knock his "patron" down.

"I think it is time to go."

Gentleman Geff arose, muttering curses at all and sundry persons and things, flung his pocketbook at Mr. Leegh and told him to go down to the office and settle the bill and order a cab.

Half an hour later Gentleman Geff and his companions were seated in a compartment of a first-class carriage, flying northward as fast as the mail train could carry them.

My gentlemen's valet and my lady's maid traveled by the second class of the same train.

Gentleman Geff made himself as disagreeable to his fellow travelers as shattered nerves and bad temper could drive him to be, and as the hours passed he became so unendurable as to tax to the utmost the forbearance of his victims, who rejoiced when the day of torture drew to a close and their train steamed into the station at Chuxton and stopped.

They all go out and sood on the platform. The train started again and steamed northward. Gentleman Geff looked around for his state carriage and four. There was none visible. He began to curse and swear.

"Come into the waiting-room, dearest," said Lamia sweetly. "No doubt your carriage will be here in a few moments."

"It should be here now, waiting. I'll be ———!" (with a terrible oath) "if I don't discharge every ——— of them as soon as I get to Haymore!" he added as he led the way into the building and sat down, not to please Lamia,

but to rest himself, for bodily weakness was one other of the bad effects of his intemperance.

There were but two other passengers besides Gentleman Geff's party who got out at Chuxton.

These were a middle-aged couple, who walked arm in arm to the Tawny Lion Tavern, engaged the only carriage there, and drove on to Haymore Hall.

These were, of course, Mr. and Mrs. John Legg.

Gentleman Geff and his friends waited and waited, the maid or the valet going out at intervals to see if the carriage from Haymore Hall had come, or was coming, Gentleman Geff cursing and swearing freely in the interim.

At last he burst out with a fearful oath, adding:

"We can't wait here all night, Leegh—and be —— to you! Be off with yourself to the Black Lion, or the Brown Bear, whatever the beastly tavern is called, and see if you can get a fly."

The Rev. Cassius, glad enough to get out of sight and hearing of his worthy brother-in-law and patron, hurried off to the Tawny Lion, and made such haste that he soon returned with the fly, which had already taken Mr. and Mrs. John Legg to Haymore Hall and had just come back to the inn.

With many threats, sealed by terrific oaths, of extirpation of all the domestic establishment at the Hall, Gentleman Geff entered the carriage with his party and drove off to meet Nemesis at Haymore Hall.

CHAPTER XXII

AN ARRIVAL AT HAYMORE

WHEN the curate burst into his wife's sitting-room with the joyful news that he was to be the Vicar of Haymore, his impetuous delight was not inspired by family affection alone, although he was deeply sensible of the benefits his beloved ones would derive from the commodious house and grounds and the liberal income attached to the living; but he was relieved and satisfied to know that his new flock, in whom he had already become interested, would not be

turned over to the wolf in sheep's clothing he knew Cassius Leegh to be.

Mrs. Campbell received his news with a stare of stupefaction.

"What do you mean?" she inquired at length.

"I mean that Mr. Randolph Hay—the real Mr. Randolph Hay—the real Squire of Haymore—has offered me the living of Haymore, which is in his gift, and has invited me to dine with him this evening to talk over the affair, and begged me to waive ceremony and bring my wife and daughter with me to meet his wife and friends. And this he asks as a particular favor, for particular reasons which shall be explained when we meet, he adds. Of course I shall go, and you will both accompany me," he concluded.

"Of course we will," readily responded Hetty.

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed Jennie in dismay.

"What are you afraid of, my dear?"

"Nothing. But, oh, papa, if I might only remain at home!"

"Jennie, dear, would you disoblige a man who is about to confer a great benefit upon you?"

"Not for the world, papa. I will go if you think my failure to do so would displease Mr. Hay."

"I do not think it would 'displease' him in the sense of angering him, my dear; for, by Longman's account, he is one of the most amiable and considerate of men; but I do think, from the tone of his note, that it would disappoint him, for evidently he has a very strong motive for wanting our presence at Haymore."

"Then certainly I will go. But have you any idea, papa, what that motive can be?"

"I think I have, my dear. You know that he who is now in possession is the rightful squire. But surely you have not forgotten that the fraudulent claimant has been daily expected for a week past."

"Oh!" exclaimed Hetty and Jennie in a breath.

"Well, he is certainly on his way to the Hall this afternoon, and without a suspicion that the rightful owner of Haymore is in possession."

"Oh, Jim!"

"Oh, papa!"

These exclamations broke simultaneously from the lips of mother and daughter.

"Yes, my dear ones; the felon, when he shall enter the Hall to take possession, as he will think, of his stolen estate, will be confronted by the friend he treacherously assassinated and plundered and left for dead to be devoured by the wolves of the Black Woods in California, eight months ago."

"Oh, Jim!"

"Oh, papa!"

"It is a terrible story, my dear ones, as Longman has told it. But retribution is at hand."

"And do you think, Jim, that Mr. Hay also wants the bigamist to be confronted by his forsaken wife?"

"Yes, dear, I think he does."

"Oh, papa! papa!" cried Jennie, turning pale.

"My dear, you met the man on the steamer when you were alone and you were not afraid of him. If you meet him at Haymore you will be on my arm," said the curate in a reassuring tone.

"And on your arm I shall fear nothing, papa, dear! And now I will not distress you any more by my nervous fancies. I will go, papa, and behave as well as I can."

"That is my good, brave girl!"

"And—I know—Mrs. Longman will take good care of baby while we are gone," said Jennie in a tone of confidence, but with a look of doubt.

"Of course she will! There can be no mistake there! She will take better care of little Essie than you or I could with our best endeavors. 'Why?'—do you ask?—because she is an experienced nurse and a conscientious woman—and a tender mother!—Are those reasons enough?" demanded Hetty, laughing.

Jennie nodded.

The proposed visit to Haymore Hall had for its suspected object a very grave and important matter. Yet these two women began immediately to think of the trifling items—what they should wear!

It is always so! Whether a woman is to be married or executed, her toilet seems to be an affair of the most serious consideration.

Mary Stuart's dress was as artistically arranged for the block as ever it had been for her bridals.

Jennie's big trunk was unlocked and invaded. She had several dresses, gifts from her generous friends in New York, much handsomer than Hetty had ever possessed; and mother and daughter were near enough of a size to make any dress in the collection fit either.

Hetty, having her choice, selected a mazarine blue satin, trimmed with deep flounces of Spanish lace, which very well suited her fair, rosy face and sunny brown hair. Jennie chose a ruby silk, trimmed with fringe of the same color, which well set off her rich brunette complexion, dark eyes and dark hair.

On ordinary occasions of neighborly visiting for so short a distance as that between the parsonage and the Hall the curate and his wife and daughter would have walked, but with such—to them—grand toilets, the two women required a carriage, which now, with his improved prospects, Mr. Campbell could well afford.

So a passing boy was called from the road and dispatched to the Red Fox to engage Nahum with his mare "Miss Nancy," and the nonedscript vehicle called by the proprietor a "fly," by the curate a "carryall," and by the village boys a "shandy-ray-dan."

At precisely six o'clock this imposing conveyance was at the gate of the parsonage waiting for the parson and his party.

Meanwhile, at Haymore Hall, preparations were completed for the reception of the most incompatible company that ever could be gathered together.

Let us take a look at the people in the house and at the guests they were expecting

First, as to the inmates, there were Ran and Judy—Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay—their solicitor, Mr. Will Walling; their brother, young Michael Man; the hunter, Samson Longman, and the old miner, Andrew Quin.

The three last-mentioned men—Man, Longman and Quin—could all swear to the identity of the squire in possession as the real Mr. Randolph Hay, and to the fraudulent claimant as an adventurer known to them by the name of Geoffrey Delamere and the nickname of Gentleman Geff.

To this party was coming Mr. and Mrs. Campbell and their daughter, Mrs. Montgomery, who could all testify to the identity of the same fraudulent claimant and bigamous

bridegroom, as an ex-captain of foot in her majesty's service, whom they had known and who had married Jennie Campbell under his real name of Kightly Montgomery.

And also Mr. and Mrs. John Legg, who could certainly point out the deceived "bride," the so-called Mrs. Randolph Hay, once called Miss Lamia Leegh, as their daughter, Lydia Legg, and the clerical impostor, the Rev. Cassius Leegh, as their son Clay Legg.

All these hosts and guests would make up the receiving party who, at eight o'clock that evening, would be waiting to welcome Gentleman Geff, his lady and her brother.

At six o'clock the resident party in the Hall were gathered in the drawing-room in full evening dress, waiting for their guests.

Judy wore her wedding dress of cream-colored silk, trimmed with duchess lace, but without the veil or orange flowers, and with pearl jewelry instead. It was the prettiest, if not the only proper dress for the occasion that she possessed, her wardrobe being but a schoolgirl's outfit.

Ran also wore his wedding suit, because—but will this be believed of the young squire of Haymore?—it was the only dress suit with which the careless young fellow had as yet thought to provide himself!

Mike, Dandy and Longman wore, also, each his "marriage garment," which had been provided for Ran's and Judy's wedding, and for the like reason—that they had no others for full dress occasions.

Will Walling, being the dude of dudes in society, had a choice among a score of evening suits, so much alike that none but a connoisseur could have seen any difference between them. He wore one of these.

"Sort of ser'ous time, Mr. Walling," said old Dandy, who found himself seated next to Mr. Will near the great open fire.

"Don't see why it should be for you, Mr. Quin," said Will Walling.

"No? Don't ee, now? Well, I allus did hate a furse."

"Fuss? Why, there will not be any."

Ran, Judy, Mike and Longman, who were standing in the front bay window looking out upon the drive and chatting together, now came sauntering up to the fire.

Ran inquired:

"What is the matter with Dandy?"

"He is afraid there will be a 'furse,' " gravely replied Will Walling.

Ran burst out laughing.

Before the peals of his mirth subsided, heavy, rumbling, tumbling wheels were heard on the drive, and the "shandy-ray-dan" drew up before the Hall door.

The mirthful group composed themselves to receive their first guests.

The door was opened by a footman, who announced:

"The Rev. Mr. Campbell, Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. Montgomery."

And the party from the parsonage entered the drawing-room.

Ran and Judy went to meet them.

"The Rev. Mr. Campbell?" said Ran interrogatively as he offered his hand to the curate.

Mr. Campbell bowed assent.

"I am very glad to see you, sir. Mrs. Campbell, I presume? And Mrs. Montgomery, also? Ladies, I am very happy to make your acquaintance. Permit me to present you to Mrs. Hay," said Ran.

And when this and all the other introductions were over and they were seated near the great open fire that the chill of the December evening made so welcome as well as so necessary, Mrs. Campbell, observing Judy's painful, blushing shyness, and attributing it all only to her extreme youth and inexperience, and not at all to the conscious ignorance that she did not expect in the young bride, addressed conversation to her and tried to draw her out.

But Judy blushed and fidgeted and answered only in monosyllables. She was so absurdly afraid of falling into that dialect which some of her friends thought one of the quaintest, sweetest charms about her.

"You have lived most of your life in America?" said Mrs. Campbell, rather as stating a fact than putting a question.

"Yes, ma'am," breathed Judy.

"I have never seen America, but my daughter here spent several months over there, and I think she was very much pleased with the country and the people—eh, Jennie?"

inquired Mrs. Campbell with the intention of drawing Mrs. Montgomery into the conversation.

"Yes, I was, indeed. Everybody was so kind to me," replied the young woman so heartily that Judy felt immediately drawn toward her, and thenceforth the intercourse of the three became easier.

Mr. Campbell, to promote a good, social understanding, also contrived to introduce the subject of mining in the gold fields of California. And here all his companions were, so to speak, at home. Every one, except the curate's party, had something to contribute of instruction upon this matter. Even Judy forgot her fear of falling into dialect, and was led to speak freely of home life in the mining camps and woman's work and mission there.

The whole company was on a full flow of conversation when the butler opened the door and announced dinner.

Ran immediately arose, offered his arm to Mrs. Campbell, and begged Mr. Campbell to take in Mrs. Hay.

Mr. Will Walling, with one of his most lady-killing glances, offered his arm to Mrs. Montgomery.

And they all went to the dining-room.

But neither in the drawing-room nor at the dinner table was the slightest allusion made to the real motive of their gathering.

An hour later, when the whole party had returned to the drawing-room and the talk had wandered from the silver mines of Colorado to those of Siberia, a footman entered the room and spoke to his master apart, and in a low voice.

"Two persons to see Mr. Andrew Quin?" Show them in here, Bassett. Or, stay!—Mr. Quin!" exclaimed Ran, turning to his old friend.

Dandy came up in a moment.

"Here are two people inquiring for you. They may come upon private business with you. I don't know, of course. So, shall they come in here, or should you prefer to meet them first?" inquired Ran.

"Oh! I know who they are! They are my niece and nevy from Hantz. I'll go and meet them!" said Dandy in a delighted tone.

"And then bring them in here and introduce them to me," said Ran.

And Dandy followed the footman out into the hall.

There he found a tall, thin, gray-haired man clothed in an ulster from head to heel, holding in his left hand a warm cap, and on his right arm a stout, rosy, handsome woman in a black velvet bonnet and a gray plaid shawl that nearly covered the whole of her black silk dress.

"You—you—you are—my niece—Julia Quin—as was?" inquired old Dandy, moving doubtfully toward the smiling woman and holding out his hand.

"Yes, indeed; that is, you are Uncle Andrew," the visitor exclaimed, taking the offered hand.

"Why, to be sure I am!" he cried, drawing her up and kissing her heartily. "And would you believe it, my wench, but this is the first time I have kissed a 'oman for more than twenty years! And now interdooce me to your hubby."

"There is hardly need; he knows who you are! Shake hands long o' your nephew," she answered, laughing.

The two men simultaneously advanced and met.

"I am proud to make your acquaintance, sir," said John Legg.

"So am I yours," answered Dandy, cordially, if a little incoherently.

"And you didn't know me, Juley, did you, now?"

"Not by sight, Uncle Andrew. You have changed some," replied Mrs. Legg, smiling and showing all her fine teeth.

"So have you! So have you! And a deal more 'n I have! I left you a tall, slim, fair wench under twenty, and I find you a broad, stout, rosy woman over forty. If that ain't a change I'd like to know what a change is!" said Dandy triumphantly.

"Why, your change! When you left us to seek your fortune in the gold fields of California you were a stout, broad-shouldered, red-faced and red-headed man of forty. Now you are a thin, pale, silver-haired old gentleman over sixty," retorted Julia, artfully mingling flattery with truth.

"Yes, that is so; that is so," meekly assented old Dandy; and then, meditatively, he added: "And I like it to be so. I like to think a good deal of my body wasting away in the sweet, sunshiny air while still I am able to walk about in it; so as when I leave it there'll be only skin and bone to lay in the ground—or very little more."

"Oh, Uncle Dandy, don't talk that a way! You can't be much over sixty, and you may live to be over eighty or

ninety—that is twenty or thirty years for you to live in this world.”

“What for?”

“‘What for?’ Why—why, to be a comfort to your dear niece who loves you,” replied Mrs. Legg, not consciously hypocritical, but self-deceived into the notion that she was sincere.

“Ah!” grunted Dandy in a tone which left his niece in doubt whether he disbelieved her or not.

Suddenly the old man, feeling himself fatigued by standing a few minutes, remembered that he had impolitely, even if unintentionally, kept his relatives in the same position.

“Oh, excuse me! Take seats! take seats!” he said, waving his hands wildly around the hall among the oaken and leather-cushioned chairs with which it was furnished.

Mr. and Mrs. Legg seated themselves on two of the nearest.

Dandy drew a third up before then and dropped into it.

“You’ll come home ’long of us and stop for good, Uncle Andrew, I hope,” said Mrs. Legg.

Before the old man could reply Mr. Legg took up the word.

“Yes, sir, we should be proud to have you a member of our family for the rest of your life! And may it be a long and happy one!”

“I do thank ye, niece and nephry! I do, indeed! But I don’t know ’bout going home ’long of you now! You see, I’m stopping here ’long o’ my young friend, Mr. Randolph Hay, and wisiting of him, am sort o’ at his orders——” began Dandy, but his niece interrupted him hastily, almost indignantly, with:

“You don’t mean to say, Uncle Andrew Quin, that while ever you have got a ’fectionate niece and nephry ready to share their last crust ’long o’ you as you have gone at your age and tuk service at the Hall?”

“Lord! No, wench! What are ye talking on? Didn’t I tell ’ee that Mr. Randolph Hay was a friend of mine? And didn’t I tell ’ee I was a-visiting on him? What be ye a-thinking on?”

“Well, then, what did you mean by being at his orders?”

“Oh! just to give my testimony onto a certain matter in case of need. And I say I can’t give you any answer to your

invitation until I see how things be gwine to turn out at the Hall!"

"Ah! how long will that be?" demanded Mrs. Legg.

"Maybe a few hours, if it don't go into court; maybe a few centuries if it do. And in the last case, I sha'n't be here so long."

"Uncle Dandy, you speak in riddles."

"I must do that at the present moment, my dear. But in a few hours, or a few centuries, if you haven't guessed them in that time, I will give you the answers to them riddles."

"Uncle Andrew, we thought by your sending a telegram to us to 'come at once,' that you were very ill."

"Well, my wench, I thank you and him for coming so very prompt. I do, indeed! So much prompter than I could expect! Really, I didn't think you would get here until some time to-morrow. But I'm glad and thankful as you're here to-night."

"But you are not ill, Uncle Dandy. You are very well, thank the Lord!"

"I never said I was ill, Juley. I said I wasn't able to travel. No more I ain't. And no more I wasn't. I'm a feeble old man, wench."

"Tut! tut! 'Feeble old man,' indeed! You are a 'fine old English gentleman,' as the song says. And now you have come home to old England so well off and so well-looking you will be getting married and putting some blooming young aunt-in-law over our heads!"

"'Blooming young' fiddlesticks!" giggled old Dandy, not displeased at the words of his niece.

"But what made you telegraph us in such hot haste?"

"'Cause, after being away so long and coming so far, I got into a sort of fever to see my kin."

"And we were in a fever to see you, you dear uncle, from the moment we got your dispatch. And we thank you now for sending it, although it did frighten us nearly to death on your account."

"Isn't it strange you should have cared so much for an old uncle you hadn't seen nor heerd tell on for twenty years or more?" demanded Dandy with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Strange or not, it was so. But is it stranger than that you should have cared so much for me as to send a telegram

and be in a fever to see me? Come, Uncle Dandy! You know 'blood is thicker than water.' "

"That is so! Yes, that is so!" muttered the old man meditatively.

"Come, Julia! I think that we must go. You see, Mr. Quin—— Or may I call you Uncle Quin?" inquired John Legg, interrupting his own speech.

"Uncle Quin, Uncle Andrew, Uncle Dandy—whichever you please," cordially replied the old man.

"Then, Uncle Quin, I must tell you that we are very glad to find you in such good health. We are sorry, though, that you cannot go home with us at once. We shall have to return to Medge to-morrow. To-night, however, we shall have to find quarters in the village here, and will see you again in the morning before we leave. Shall we say good-night now?" said John Legg, offering his hand.

"Oh, stay! stop! I forgot! Mr. Randolph Hay wishes to see you both—wants to make your acquaintance—and made me promise to bring you into the drawing-room. Come!" said Dandy, taking the offered hand of his nephew and trying to draw him toward a door.

John Legg hesitated, looked at his wife, and then inquired:

"Who's in there?"

"Squire and wife, and brother-in-law and lawyer, parson and wife and daughter, and a backwoodsman—all plain people as you needn't be afraid on; I ain't."

"We would rather not go in. We are not exactly dressed for company, right off a railway journey, and a very long one at that, as we are. Can't you step in and persuade the young squire to come out and speak to us? You can tell him how it is."

"Well, I'll go and try," said Dandy.

And he returned to the drawing-room, went up to Ran, and whispered:

"Mr. Hay, my niece and nephew be plain folk and a bit shy. They want to pay their respects to you, but don't like to face the company in the drawing-room. Will you please come and speak to them in the hall?"

"Certainly," replied Ran, rising; and then turning to his friends he added:

"I am called out for a moment. Will you excuse me?"

Smiles and nods from every one answered him.

He followed Dandy to the hall.

"Mr. Randolph Hay, sir," said the old man with solemn formality, "will you have the goodness to allow me to inter-dooce to your honor my niece and nephew, Juley and John Legg?"

Julia stood up and dropped her rustic, housemaid's courtesy. John took off his hat and bowed.

Ran held out a hand to each, saying cordially:

"I am very glad to see you. Your uncle is one of my oldest and most esteemed friends; so that any friends of his own shall always be most heartily welcome. You are just from Hantz?"

"Straight, sir. Arrived by the train that reached Chuxton at six o'clock this evening," answered John Legg.

CHAPTER XXIII

ANOTHER ARRIVAL

Now that was the train by which Ran had expected Gentleman Geff and his suit, and this was about an hour beyond the time when they were due at Haymore. So his next question was the inevitable one:

"Did any other passengers leave that train for Haymore?"

Then John Legg stopped to laugh a little before he answered:

"Oh! yes, sir. There were two gentlemen and a lady. I didn't see their faces nor hear their names, but they seemed to belong to some seat in the neighborhood, for the tallest of the gentlemen seemed to have expected the family carriage to be there on the spot to meet the party. And when he found that it was not, well, sir, I don't think as in all my long life I ever heard such a vast amount and choice variety of cursing."

"Gentleman Geff all over!" muttered Dandy to himself.

"What became of them?" inquired Ran.

"Don't know, sir. We left him there cursing land and water, sun, moon and stars, so to speak, and threatening the

destruction of the earth, or words to that effect, if his carriage and servants failed to appear within the next five minutes. We walked to the Tawny Lion Inn and secured the only conveyance to be found and came on here while the gentleman waited for his coach and four, or whatever it might have been."

"And is waiting there still, probably, and will have to wait until your 'conveyance' returns."

"Well, sir, that will not be long. Julia and myself are about to say good-night," said John Legg respectfully.

"'Good-night,' indeed! By no means! What do you mean? Come two hundred miles or so to see your uncle here at Haymore Hall, and after an hour's visit say good-night? Not at all! You and Mrs. Legg will, I hope, give us the pleasure of remaining with us during your stay in Yorkshire," said Ran heartily.

"You are very kind, sir, and we thank you very much, but——"

John Legg paused and looked at his wife, who did not help him by a word or a glance.

"But I will take no denial. Where shall I send for your luggage?" inquired Ran.

"We have nothing but hand-bags, sir, and they are in the carryall outside. You see, we came directly from the Chuxton station to this house, and have all we carried in the vehicle with us. We intended to return in it, and to put up at the Red Fox Inn in your village here."

"But you will do no such thing. You will get your hand-bags out of the carriage, send it back to Chuxton—where the swearing gentleman is waiting, swearing harder than ever, no doubt—and you will remain here with us."

"What do you say, Juley?" said John Legg, appealing to his wife. "Come, woman, can't you help a fellow a little?"

"What do you say, Uncle Dandy?" inquired Julia, appealing in turn to her old relative.

"You stop here! Both on you stop! You take Mr. Hay at his word! Ran Hay means every word that he speaks. If he says he wants you to stop here he does want you to stop here! And as he does, you ought to do it to please him as well as yourselves, which you will be sure to do, I know. That's all I have got to say!"

While Dandy was speaking and his niece and nephew

listening, Ran beckoned a footman to follow him, and stepped out of the front door and went up to the driver of the carryall, who stood by the horses' heads, clapping his thickly gloved hands and stamping his heavily shod feet to keep warm.

"You came from Chuxton?"

"Yes, sir, and been waiting here for more'n an hour for the parties I fotch, and myself near frozen, spite of my piles of clothes and——"

"Charles," said Hay, turning his head and speaking in a low voice to the footman, "go in and get a large mug of strong ale and bring it out to this man."

The footman vanished on his errand.

The driver continued as if he had not been interrupted:

"Horses like to catch their death of cold, spite o' two heavy blankets apiece laid o' top of them."

"I am sorry I can do nothing for your horses, but if you think any of the grooms might, just let them do it," said Ran.

"No, sir. There can't nobody do nothing for 'em here. And nothing will help them but a brisk trot back to Chuxton and a warm mash and good bed when they get there."

The footman came out with a pewter quart measure of strong, foaming ale and handed it to the driver.

The latter took it with a "thanky" to the server and a bow to the master, and said:

"Thank you, sir. This saves my life. Here's to a long and happy one for you and yours. Is the party inside ready to go back, if you please, sir?" inquired the driver after he had taken one long draught of the ale and stopped to draw a deep sigh of satisfaction.

"They are not going back. Charles, get the bags and other effects out of the carriage and carry them into the house."

The footman obeyed, loading himself with two heavy bags, two rugs and a large umbrella, and took them into the hall while the driver was taking his second long pull at the ale.

"How much is your fare?" inquired Hay.

The man stopped to recover breath with another devout inhalation of enjoyment, and then answered:

"Ten shillings, sir."

Ran took out his purse and gave the man half a sovereign and half a crown.

"Thank you, sir," said the driver, touching his hat, not for the fare, but for the "tip."

Then he took the blankets off his horses, folded and put them under his box and mounted to his seat.

"You had better drive as fast as you can, not only for the sake of warming the blood of the horses, but for that of cooling the temper of the gentleman who is waiting for you with his party at the station."

"Another fare to-night, sir?"

"Yes, so I hear from the people you have just brought."

"Then the master won't only have to find fresh horses, but a fresh driver, sir; for I'm just dead beat. Any more commands, sir?"

"Not any."

"Good-night, then, sir."

"Good-night."

The driver took up his "ribbons" and started his horses in a brisk trot.

Ran turned to re-enter the house.

He was met by John Legg running out bareheaded.

"What's the matter?" demanded Ran.

"The man has gone off without his fare."

"Well, go in the house—you will catch your death of cold; but you can't stop him now. He is through the lodge gates by this time," said Ran, playfully taking John Legg by the shoulders and turning him "right face forward" to the ascending steps.

They re-entered the house together.

Mrs. Legg had already taken off her heavy shawl and bonnet, and had arranged her hair before the hall mirror, and stood in her neat plain dress, with fresh *crêpe lis* ruches—which she had taken from the flap pocket outside her bag—around neck and whists, and her only ornaments a gold watch and chain and a set of pearls, consisting of brooch and earrings, which had been her husband's wedding present to herself and which she always carried about her when traveling for fear, if left at home, they might be stolen. These she had now taken from her pocket and put on.

Altogether she was quite presentable in that drawing-room. And as, with all, she was a "comely" matron, her

husband looked upon her with pardonable pride as well as love.

But while furtively glancing at his wife he was putting off his ulster and speaking to his host all at the same time.

"I hadn't a notion what you were about," he was saying, "until your man came in loaded down with our luggage. As soon as I saw that and found out what you had done I hurried out to pay the fare, but the carryall had gone."

"It is all right," said Ran. "Come in now and let me introduce you to my friends."

"Please, Mr. Hay, let me brush his hair and put a clean collar and bosom on him first. I won't be two minutes," pleaded Mrs. Legg.

Ran yielded, and the man's toilet was made in the hall, as the woman's had been a few minutes previous.

Then Ran took Mrs. Legg on his arm and led the way into the drawing-room, followed by old Dandy and John Legg.

Hay presented his new visitor first to his wife and then to all his guests. And the plain pair, it is almost needless to say, were as cordially received by the cultured people from the English rectory as they were by the border men from the Californian mining camp.

When this little ripple in the circle had subsided all settled again into small groups.

The four women found themselves temporarily together, and fell to talking of the weather, servants, children and the approaching Christmas holidays.

Mrs. Campbell and her daughter sat one on each side of Julia and made much of her. No word from Hetty or Jennie revealed the fact that Mrs. John Legg had once been in their service.

But Julia made no secret of it.

"I was housekeeper at the rectory of Medge, ma'am, in the old lady's time, three years before his reverence was married."

"She means in my grandmother's days," put in Mr. Campbell.

"And for eighteen years afterward; making twenty-one years in all that I lived with the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Campbell. I held that child, Miss Jennie—Mrs. Montgomery that now is—on my lap when she wasn't twenty-four hours

old. And nursed her and took care of her from the time of her birth until that of her marriage," said Julia.

And Jennie, who was holding her hand, raised and pressed it to her own breast.

"Yes; and I have lived with them ever since, up to the time when they left to come up here to Yorkshire. Then I took Mr. Legg's offer and married him."

"I hope you have been very happy," said Jennie.

"I am as happy, dear, as I can be parted from you all. We came to Haymore to see Uncle Dandy. And we intended to go to-morrow and see you. We little expected to find you here. I haven't seen his reverence since the day he married John and me."

"That was the last ceremony he ever performed in Medge parish church," said Mrs. Campbell.

While they talked in this manner of strictly personal and domestic matters, the rector himself was one of a group gathered around Mr. Will Walling, who was another Gulliver or Munchausen for telling fabulous adventures of which he himself was the hero.

The inevitable subject of mining had suggested to Mr. Will the story of the horrors of penal servitude in the silver mines of the Ural Mountains, and he was telling it as if the false charge, the secret conviction, the exile, the journey, the life in the mines, the escape and flight through the snow and ice of Siberia, and all the attendant awful sufferings had been in his own personal experience. And all his audience listened with the fullest faith and deepest interest—that is, all except two—Ran, who had heard the story told before to-night, and John Legg, who had very recently read it in a dilapidated old volume bought for threepence at a second-hand book stand.

Ran was bored, and could hardly repress the rudeness of a yawn; and he saw, besides, that John Legg looked incredulous and sarcastic.

Then he thought of the party of sinners who were by this time on their way to Haymore and to judgment. And then that their coming would bring pain and shame to more than one of that party. But all—even poor Jennie—had been prepared for the event except John Legg. Then it occurred to him that he must warn the poor father of the shock that might otherwise overwhelm him.

He stopped and said:

"Mr. Legg, will you favor me with a few minutes' conversation in the library?"

"Surely, sir," replied the greengrocer with alacrity as he arose to accompany his host.

"Friends, will you excuse us for a few moments?"

"Yes, if we must," replied Will Walling, answering for the company; "but, really, you know, it is a shame to go before you have heard the end of the story."

"Oh, I have heard you tell it many times," said Ran.

"Yes; but Mr. Legg hasn't."

"Oh, I have done better than that. I have been through it. Why, man, I was the very Enokoff who helped Walling-ski to make good his flight across the frontier. Only my real name was not Enokoff, but Legginoff, or Legenough, if you like it better," said the greengrocer as he followed Ran from the drawing-room.

Will Walling started, but could make nothing of the answer; yet to his circle of listeners he said in explanation:

"Too bad of Hay to have anticipated me and told that old fellow the end of the story while they were pretending to listen."

Meanwhile Ran had led his companion to the library, where both sat down on a leathern armchair, on opposite sides of a narrow table, on which they leaned their arms, facing each other.

"Now, then, sir, I am at your service," said Legg.

"Do you smoke?" inquired Ran.

"Only occasionally; when I need a sedative and philosophy."

"Exactly. I smoke semi-occasionally for the same reasons. Will you take an exceptionally fine cigar now? It is an Isabella Regina."

"Thank you."

Ran produced a case and matches. They lighted their weeds and began to smoke.

Ran let a few minutes elapse to allow the sedative to take some effect upon his guest, and then broke the subject for which he had brought the old man there.

"Mr. Legg, I hope you will pardon me for asking a question that may seem to be an unpardonable liberty," he said in a low voice.

"Ask me what you please, sir. I am sure it will not be an offensive liberty, since you could not possibly take one," gravely replied the old man.

"Then, when did you hear from your son and your daughter?"

"I have no son or daughter, sir. The young man and woman to whom you may allude forsook our humble way of life as soon as we had finished educating them above their position, each taking his or her way. Yet I am often sorry for them and anxious about them, for they were once my children, though they discard and despise me, for I know that for that very reason they must come to grief and shame in this world as well as in the next, if they do not repent and reform. For, look you, Mr. Hay, I am an old man, and all my long life I have noticed this one thing—that a man may break every commandment in the decalogue, except one, and he may escape punishment in this world, whatever becomes of him in the next. I say he may, and he often does. But if he breaks the Fifth Commandment—called the Commandment with Promise—his punishment, or his discipline of pain and failure, comes in this world. However, upon repentance, he may be forgiven in the next. This is the fruit of my observation and experience of men. I cannot answer for those of other people."

"Well, Mr. Legg, I fear your opinion is about to be sustained in the fate of the young people. They are both about to come to grief; and I am glad for the girl's sake that you are here to-night, for I am sure you would stand by your daughter in her trouble," said Ran.

The old man stared at the earnest young speaker and then said:

"So it was for this, Mr. Hay, that you made old Andrew Quin bring me here by telegraph."

"No! Heaven knows I had nothing whatever to do with bringing you to Haymore. That was entirely Mr. Quin's own idea."

"Then it was old Andrew that worked to bring about my visit here in the interest of my undutiful daughter."

"No! Again you are wrong. Andrew Quin knew nothing whatever of your chance of meeting your son or daughter at Haymore."

"Then the present crisis is accidental."

"Providential, rather."

"I stand corrected. Where are these people now?"

"They are on their way to this house. They will be here in one hour from this time."

"My wretched son and daughter?"

"Yes, Mr. Legg. Your son and daughter, and the man that she believes to be her husband."

"The man that she believes to be her husband! Believes only! Heaven and earth! has she fallen as low as that?" groaned the father.

"Not knowingly. Not guiltily. Neither state, church nor society will hold her guilty of a deep wrong that she has suffered, not committed. Hers was not an elopement. Not a clandestine marriage. Her courtship was open. Her engagements approved by all her friends. Her wedding was public, and the reception that followed was the social event of the season."

"Yet the man is not her husband?"

"No."

"How so?"

"Because he was and had been a married man for two years previous to his meeting with your daughter. Because he was and is a bigamist. More than that, he is a forger, a perjurer, a swindler, a highway robber and a midnight assassin!"

"Great Heaven! Great Heaven!" groaned the wretched father, covering his face with his hands.

"In a word, this man may be called the champion criminal of his age," continued Ran, unmercifully "piling up the agonies."

"And how is it that he is at large?"

"Because his crimes have only recently been brought to light."

"And this man has betrayed my poor girl!"

"It was not her fault."

"Yes—ah, me!—it was. Her pride, beauty and ambition have brought her to ruin."

"No! You may still help and save her."

"I doubt it. But tell me all about it," said poor John Legg, sinking back in his chair and covering his working features with his open palms.

Ran began and told the whole story of the connection of

Gentleman Geff, Lamia Leegh, Jennie Campbell and himself, comprised within the last year.

"And in the room there," he concluded, "gathered to meet and confound the great criminal are the witnesses of his crimes, the testifiers to his identity, and, more terrible than all, his victims, raised as it were from the dead against him. Among them Jennie Montgomery, the daughter of James Campbell, the girl who was nursed and brought up for sixteen years by your good wife, and who was married, then deserted, and finally stabbed by that felon. Among them, too, myself, Ran Hay, the friend who shared his cabin and his crust—nay, his heart and soul—with him, and yet whom he shot down from behind at midnight in the Black Woods of California. Among them, too, will be the wronged father of that unhappy girl——"

"No! no! No! no! Oh, Mr. Hay! I cannot be present at that scene! The sight of me would add to her suffering. No! When it is all over, and the man who has spoiled her life has been exposed, then take care of her for a few hours and afterward let her know of her father; that, however his heart may have been hardened against his vain, haughty, disdainful daughter, it is softened by his humbled, grieved and suffering child. Let her know that her father's arms and her father's home are ever opened to his daughter. But I cannot see her to-night, Mr. Hay. I am very grateful to you, sir. I understand you now. But please leave me and send Julia to me. She knows how to deal with me better than any one else."

"I will do so at once. And, Mr. Legg, please use this house and the servants just as if they were entirely your own. Call for anything you may like, and do exactly as you choose," said Ran as he took the old man's hand, pressed it kindly, and left the library.

Then John Legg dropped his head upon his folded arms on the table and burst into tears.

Other arms were soon around him.

He looked up.

Julia stood there.

He told her all in fewer words than Ran had taken to tell the story.

She drew a chair and sat down beside him, took his hand and held it while she said:

"Well, don't cry no more. The girl has had her lesson; but the shame of her marriage is not hers or ours. We will take her home and give her love and comfort and peace, if we cannot give her happiness. I will be as true and tender a mother to her as if she were my own hurt child. And her own mother looking down from heaven will see no cause to blame me. At Medge her story need never be known. She will be the Liddy Legg of her youth. She went for to be a governess in a rich American family—she has come home now for good. That is true, and it's all of the truth that need be known at Medge. The writing between the lines need not be read there. And there is Uncle Dandy, who is just as kind as he is rich. He will surely be good to the poor gal."

Suddenly Julia paused and fell into deep thought.

While she had been comforting her husband in his sorrow over his miserable daughter her own better nature was aroused, and when finally she had occasion to allude to her old uncle she felt ashamed of the selfish and avaricious spirit that had inspired her to run after him for his imaginary wealth and to covet its inheritance, and she secretly resolved to try, with the Lord's help, to put away the evil influence and think of the old relative as a lonely old man whose age and infirmities it should be not only her duty but her pleasure to cherish and support.

And then the spirit of avarice departed for the time being, at least; for a devil cannot endure the presence of an angel.

While this change was silently passing within her she still held her husband's hand.

At length she spoke again, slightly varying the subject.

"What about the boy?" she inquired, referring to his son.

"The man, you mean; for he is twenty-eight years old. I don't know! I hope he will never get a pulpit, for I know this much, that he is totally unfit for one; yes, and the bishops, whose boots he is always licking in the hope of preferment, know it, too! He got the promise of the living here at Haymore from the fraudulent claimant who has ruined us all, or tried to do so; but that goes for nothing at all, for Mr. Randolph Hay has already given it to the Rev. Mr. Campbell, a good man and worthy minister. So my vagabond will also have to meet with humiliating dis-

appointment along with his felonious patron and wretched sister."

"Think no more on it, except to do the best you can and leave the rest to the Lord," said Julia.

At this moment the door opened and a footman entered with a large tray laden with tea, bread and butter, game pie, cakes, sweetmeats and other edibles. He put it down on the tables between the two people and said:

"My mistress thought, sir, that you might like refreshments after your journey. And would you prefer a bottle of wine, sir?"

"No, thank you; nothing more whatever. You need not wait," replied Mr. Legg.

The man touched his forehead and left the room.

Judy had remembered what Ran, with all his goodness of heart, had forgotten.

But, then, it is almost always Eve, and seldom or never Adam, who is

"On hospitable thoughts intent,"

in the way of feeding at least.

Julia poured out tea for her husband and filled his plate with game pie and bread and butter, and made him eat and drink and set him a good example in that agreeable duty.

In the meantime the company in the drawing-room were getting a little weary of waiting.

Mr. Hay had contrived to draw the curate aside, where they could settle the affair of the living. It was but a short conference, for Mr. Campbell was glad and grateful to accept it. At the end of their talk the minister said very sincerely:

"The utmost that I dared to hope for was the curacy under the new rector, whoever he should be! But the living! It is more than I ever dreamed of or deserved! Yet will I, with the Lord's help, do my utmost for the parish."

What Ran might have replied was cut short with some sudden violence.

First by the heavy rumbling and tumbling of some clumsy carryall over the rough drive as it drew up to the front of the Hall and stopped; then by loud and angry tones of

voice; then by a resounding peal of knocks on the door which seemed to reverberate through the entire building.

The arrival was an embodied storm that threatened to dash in the entire front of the house.

In the library John Legg sprang up and bolted the door against the uproar, and then sat down by his trembling wife.

In the drawing-room all was excitement and expectation.

"It's him!" exclaimed old Dandy, with his few spikes of white hair rising on end around his bald crown. "It's him! Straight from the pit of fire and brimstone, and possessed of the devil and all his demons!"

In the hall the frightened footmen hastened to throw open the front door.

Gentleman Geff burst in, cursing and swearing in the most appalling manner, and threatening every one in his house with instant discharge, death and destruction, for having kept him waiting at Chuxton so many hours and not having sent his coach and four and mounted servants to meet him!

So, raving like a madman whose frenzy is heightened by *mania a potu*, he broke into the drawing-room in the midst of the assembled company.

Ran Hay arose and advanced down the room to meet him.

CHAPTER XXIV

AT BAY

RANDOLPH HAY advanced to meet the violent intruder.

Gentleman Geff was still raging and threatening.

"How do you do, Mr. Geoffrey Delamere?" coolly inquired Ran, calling the man of many aliases by the name by which he had known him in California.

Gentleman Geff stopped suddenly and drew himself up with drunken arrogance.

In the quiet, low-voiced, well-dressed young gentleman who stood before him, with clear, pale complexion, neatly trimmed hair and mustache, who wore light kid gloves, and had a rosebud in his buttonhole, he did not recognize the

rough, rollicking, sunburned and shock-headed lad who had befriended him at Grizzly Gulch, and whom he himself had shot down, robbed and left for dead, to be devoured by wolves in the Black Woods of the gold State, and whose name and inheritance he had stolen.

"Who in thunder and lightning are you, you villain? And what the fire and brimstone are you doing here, in my house, you rascal?" he fiercely demanded, and without waiting for an answer he fell to cursing and swearing in the most furious manner, ending with: "If you don't get out of this in double-quick I'll have you kicked out of doors and into the horse pond, you scoundrel!"

"Perhaps if you give yourself the trouble to look up in my face you may recognize me, as well as my right to be here," said Ran calmly.

Gentleman Geff stared.

"You should remember me. It has not been so long; only since the second of last April that we parted company in the Black Woods of California," continued Ran.

Then the criminal's face blanched, his jaw fell, his eyes started, he stared with growing horror for a moment, then reeled, and must have fallen but that he was caught in the strong arms of Longman, who supported him to a high-backed armchair and sat him down in it, where he seemed to fall into a state of stupefaction. The awful shock of this meeting had not sobered him—he was too far gone in drunkenness for that; but it had reduced him to a state of imbecility.

Meanwhile Mr. Cassius Leegh, who had been engaged outside doing all the duties of his patron, seeing to the luggage, paying off the carryall, and even taking care of his sister, now strutted into the room with the lady on his arm, his head thrown back, his nose in the air, and altogether with a fine manner of scorn.

He was not so drunk as his patron; he was only drunk enough to be a very great man, indeed; but not to be a very violent one.

"What is the meaning of this irregularity?" he loftily demanded. "We did not expect company!"

"We did," said Ran with a touch of humor in his tone.

"Pray, who are you, sir?" demanded Leegh, throwing up his head.

"Ask your companion there," replied Ran with a wave of his hand toward the panic-stricken object in the armchair.

"Hay!" exclaimed Leegh, turning to his patron. "What in the dev—what on earth does all this mean? Who are all these people?"

Gentleman Geff opened his mouth, gasped, rolled his eyes and sank into silence.

"Can't you speak, man? What the dev—what is the matter with you? And what is all this infer—this confusion about?" angrily demanded Leegh.

Gentleman Geff gasped two or three times, rolled his eyes frightfully and replied:

"It is the day of judgment! And the dead—the murdered dead—have risen to bear witness against me!—have left their graves to cry 'blood for blood'!" he shrieked; and then his eyes stared and became fixed, his jaw fell and his face blanched.

"Poor idiot!" exclaimed Mr. Leegh in extreme disgust. "I never saw his so drunk as this. If he goes it at this pace he will soon come to the end of life. I find I must take command here and clear the house. Have I your authority to act for you, sister?" he inquired in a whisper of the woman on his arm.

"Yes—yes," she faltered faintly; "but take me first to a chair or sofa. I feel as if about to faint. Oh, what does it all mean?"

"It means that our friend here," he replied, pointing to the collapsed criminal in the chair, "has delirium tremens. And 'has 'em bad,' as the old costermonger used to say of his cousin," he added as he placed his sister in a large, cushioned armchair, into which she sank exhausted.

Then he glanced over the scene, taking stock of the company preparatory to his work of clearing the room.

Nearest to him, on his right hand, stood the young colossus, Samson Longman, leaning over the chair of poor old Dandy, who sat with his bald head dropped and his withered face hidden in the palms of his hands.

These two men were both strangers to Mr. Leegh, who did not feel inclined to commence his work of expulsion with the giant or his immediate protégé.

A little further off, on his left, stood a group of three—Ran, Mike and Will Walling—talking together. These

were also strangers to Mr. Leegh, who did not feel disposed to begin with them either.

Still further off, straight before him, at the other end of the room, was another group, each individual of which he recognized. These were the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Campbell, and their daughter, Jennie, whom he had often visited at their parsonage in Medge; and to Mr. Campbell he had but lately written, as the reader may remember, warning him to leave the rectory, to which he himself—Leegh—had been appointed.

Here, then, was his opportunity. He would begin with these.

The rector—as we must call him now, since his induction into the Haymore living by Mr. Randolph Hay—was seated on a corner sofa with his wife and daughter, the latter sitting between her father and her mother, with her distressed face hidden in that mother's bosom. Yet Leegh had instinctively recognized her as well as her parents.

He went up, nodded to Mr. Campbell and offered his hand.

The rector bowed in return, but did not take Leegh's hand.

"I am surprised to see you here this evening, sir. How do you do, Mrs. Campbell? I hope Miss Jennie is quite well," said Leegh in an offhand way, not choosing to notice the rector's coolness, not knowing or suspecting that he was the rector.

"I am here at the invitation of Mr. Randolph Hay," said Mr. Campbell.

"My daughter is quite well, thank you, Mr. Leegh," said Mrs. Campbell.

Both the husband and the wife answering his careless greeting simultaneously.

"I am glad to hear of Miss Jennie's good health. She is only tired, then, perhaps, or sleepy? Did you say you were here at the invitation of the squire, Mr. Campbell?"

"Yes, sir; of Mr. Randolph Hay," calmly replied the rector.

"Then he must have been even drun—I mean, more incomprehensible than he is now. Pray, did he also invite all these other people I see here?"

"I think not. He did not invite you, or your sister, or Capt. Montgomery," replied Mr. Campbell.

"Didn't invite me or my sister! Why, my sister is his wife, man, and I am his brother-in-law! And he brought us down with him to-night."

"I think not," said the rector.

"You think not! Why, here we are, anyway. Here I am I. There is my sister in that armchair, somewhat prostrated and disgusted, to be sure. And there is her husband on that high-back throne, somewhat 'disguised,' as one might say."

"I think you are mistaken in all that you have said," quietly remarked Mr. Campbell.

"I think that everybody in the room, except myself, is drunk or demented, or most likely both!" exclaimed Leegh, losing his temper and now speaking recklessly, for he was not yet quite sober.

Mr. Campbell made no reply to these words.

"Will you be good enough to explain yourself?" rudely demanded Leegh.

"I have no explanation to make about myself. For any other questions you would like to ask I must refer you to Mr. Randolph Hay himself."

"He is in a fine condition to answer questions, is he not, now? Look at him!" said Leegh, pointing to the abject creature in the chair.

The rector looked and sighed to see the human wreck.

"Now, then, will you explain?"

"No; I must still refer you to Mr. Randolph Hay."

"Confound your insolence!" between his grinding teeth. And then, aloud: "You got my letter, I presume?"

"Warning me to vacate the rectory?"

"Of course. What else should I have written to you about?"

"I got your letter."

"Well, I hope you are ready to go. Because I shall certainly enter into possession on the first of January," said Leegh rudely.

"The rectory is even now quite ready for the new incumbent."

"I am glad to hear it, though I shall not care to take possession until the first of January. And now, Mr. Campbell, excuse me for reminding you that the hour is late, and sug-

gesting that, as this is the evening of Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay's arrival, it would be in good form for visitors to retire."

"Thank you; but I must speak to my host and hostess first."

At this moment Judy came up from some obscure part of the big room in which she had been lurking like a frightened kitten.

Mr. Campbell made room for her, and Judy sat down beside her friends.

"Who is this young lady? Will you introduce me to her?" said Leegh with one of his lady-killing smiles.

"Excuse me, sir. I would rather not do so," said Mr. Campbell.

And then turning to Judy, who had looked up with surprise and pity, for she could not bear to see any one pained or mortified, he added in explanation:

"No, my dear; I cannot do it."

Then, with a smothered imprecation, Leegh turned on his heel and sauntered down the room to rejoin his sister, and feeling as if he were in a very weird and ugly dream.

In the meanwhile, however, Ran, Mike and Will Walling had been taking counsel together, and often glancing from the stupefied figure of Gentleman Geff, who still sat with blanched face, dropped jaw and starting eyes, staring into vacancy, to that of Lamia Leegh, who reclined on her chair with closed eyes and in a half-fainting condition.

At length Ran from the pity of his heart said:

"Walling, I cannot bear to expose that poor woman to the awful humiliation of hearing the whole of that fellow's villainies exposed. I will go into the library and persuade her poor father to receive her in there and save her from this trial. And do you go to her and break the news of Mr. Legg's presence in the house. You need tell her no more as yet. The worst need not be told until later."

"Very well, I will do as you say. There is her precious brother talking to Mr. Campbell. I wonder what he is saying," said Will Walling as he went up and stood beside the chair of Lamia Leegh.

She never moved or opened her eyes. She did not seem to have perceived his presence. He wished to address her, but hardly knew what name to call her. If he should call

her by her real name, or even by the name she bore in New York before her marriage, it would startle and offend her. It would seem a deliberate insult. If he should call her by Ran's name it would be by a false one.

The last alternative, however, was the one on which he decided to act. It could do no harm, he thought, to humor her delusion by calling her by the name she honestly supposed to be hers by right of marriage.

He laid his hand lightly on the back of her chair, stooped, and said softly:

"Mrs. Hay!"

She started, opened her eyes, sat up and gazed at him.

"I have startled you. I am sorry," he said.

"Mr. Walling! You here! In England! At Haymore!" she exclaimed, gazing at him as if she could not turn away her eyes.

"Yes, as you see!" he answered.

"And we did not know you were coming. At least, I did not. And, oh! what brought you here? I don't mean to be rude, though the question seems a rude one."

"It is a most natural one. I came—for a change," replied Will Walling evasively.

"And when did you arrive?"

"In England? Tuesday."

"And when did you come to Haymore?"

"Late last night."

"You came straight here, then, expecting to find us at home, and found no one to receive you—except the servants, of course. I hope they made you comfortable. And, of course they told you that we were to be home to-night."

"Yes, of course, thank you."

"I am so glad you are here. And, oh, Mr. Walling, since you are here, will you please to tell me who all these strangers are and why they are here, and what, oh! what has reduced my husband to that condition? He looks as if he were struck with idiocy," said Lamia with ill-concealed scorn and hatred.

Will Walling thought within himself that she would have little to suffer from wounded affections, whatever she might have to endure from humbled pride. Still, he pitied her, and answered gently:

"That group on the sofa, to whom your brother is speak-

ing, consists of the Rev. Mr. Campbell, his wife and daughter, who are quite old friends of Mr. Leegh."

Lamia had never heard the name of Jennie Montgomery's parents. She scrutinized the group, and then remarked:

"That girl who is leaning on the elder woman's shoulder reminds me strongly of some one whom I have seen somewhere, but I cannot remember where, for I cannot quite see her clearly at this distance. And who are the other people in the room?"

"They are all friends of Mr. Randolph Hay who knew him in California, before he came into his estate."

"Oh, how interesting! And they came here to see him?"

"Yes, and to give him a reception in his own house," said Will Walling, not quite truly.

"Oh, how interesting! And, Mr. Walling, who is that pretty young woman who has just gone up to the clergyman's party?"

"Some friend of the family. Here comes your brother. He has just left the group. And before he comes, my dear Mrs. Hay, I must tell you that there are others, or rather, there is one other person in this house in whom you are more intimately interested than in all the rest," said Will Walling very gravely.

Lamia looked a little disturbed.

"Who can that be?" she inquired in a low, faltering voice.

"Can you not surmise? Think what near relatives you have living."

"I—have no near relatives living—except my brother, and—my father."

"Your father is here, longing to see his only daughter."

"My father here? What has he come for?" demanded this Goneril in so sharp a tone of displeasure and annoyance that Will Walling lost all pity for her and spoke near his purpose when he answered:

"He is waiting here in fatherly love and compassion, to be a shelter to his only daughter in the hour of her utmost need."

Lamia turned deadly pale and sick. The words of the lawyer, taken together with the awful exclamation of her husband before he fell into his stupor, warned her that some terrible revelation was at hand.

"Oh! this is some horrid nightmare!" she muttered.

At this crisis the sauntering and unsteady steps of Mr. Leegh brought him up to his sister's side.

"And now!" he exclaimed, "what is all this? And who the dev—deuce—mischief are you, sir?"

"Oh, Cassius!" cried Lamia in great excitement. "This is Mr. Walling, of the firm of Walling & Walling, New York, of whom you have heard us speak. There is something dreadful the matter that has gathered all these people here. He tells me that our father is here also——"

"The old man! What is the—what has brought him here?" demanded Leegh in as sharp a tone as his sister had used.

Will Walling was as much disgusted with the one as with the other. He answered the question:

"Your father is here, Mr. Leegh, to succor his daughter in her distress. Presently I shall ask you, her brother, to lead her to your father's presence."

"It is my husband. My beast of a husband! What has he been doing! Oh, Heaven! I heard him say something about murder, and I thought it was only his drunken raving. Has he committed murder, then, and will he be hanged? If so, I will never show my face in England or New York again!" exclaimed Lamia, losing all decent self-control and becoming hysterical, not from anxious affection, but from alarmed pride.

"Compose yourself, madam. There is no murder on his hands. There is nothing but what you may get over in the peace of your father's house," said Will Walling.

"Why cannot you tell me what it is, then?" demanded Lamia, breaking into sobs and tears.

"Yes! why the mischief can't you speak out?"

"Because I gave my word not to do so. Because, in any case, I would not do so. Because it is not even proper that I should. And, finally, because it is best that your sister should hear what she must from her father."

"It is a nightmare! A horrid, hideous nightmare!" cried Lamia, sobbing violently.

"When are we to hear this news, whatever it may be—this mystery, this calamity—from the old gentleman?" roughly demanded Leegh.

"When the gentleman who is with him now comes out to

tell us that your father is ready to receive you," replied Will Walling.

"By ——! Upon my honor, you are very cool, sir," sneered Leegh.

"It is a nightmare! A ghastly, deadly nightmare!" wailed Lamia.

"It is the day of doom, and the quick and the dead rise in judgment!" groaned a deep, hollow voice.

It was that of Gentleman Geff. His rolling eyes had fallen upon a group composed of Mike, Dandy and Longman, and he sat staring in horror upon them.

"That drunken idiot ought to be carried up to bed, Lamia," said Leegh in strong disgust.

"I will not have him touched," replied the woman, with a shudder.

In the meantime Randolph Hay had crossed the hall and turned the knob of the library door. He found it locked. Then he rapped.

"Who is there?" inquired the quavering voice of John Legg.

"It is I, your friend, Hay," replied Ran.

The door was instantly opened by Julia Legg.

"Please excuse us and come in, Mr. Hay. We only locked the door to keep that terrible man from bursting in upon us," said Julia apologetically.

"Quite right," replied Ran, good-humoredly, as he entered the room.

He found John Legg still sitting at the narrow table from which the little supper had not yet been removed. The poor man looked pale, haggard, anxious and many years older than he had seemed a few hours before.

Ran also took the precaution to lock the door before he came and seated himself at the table opposite John Legg. Julia drew a chair to the side of her husband, sat down and took his hands in hers.

"You look troubled, Mr. Hay. You have something more to tell me about my poor girl, and you shrink from telling it. But speak out, sir. I can bear it," said John Legg, with stoical resignation.

"No, indeed, my friend, it is nothing more than I have to communicate of her; at least, nothing ill. I came in

here only to plead for a little change in our plans," said Ran soothingly.

"What is it, dear sir? Your kind will should be our law."

"By no means!" earnestly exclaimed Ran. "But the change I wished to make is this: You remember that you proposed to keep out of your daughter's way until she should have heard the worst that she must hear of her real position?"

"Yes. I shrank, and still shrink, from adding to her pain and mortification by my presence," sighed the unhappy father.

"But, my dear Mr. Legg, consider for one moment. She has not yet heard the humiliating facts, but it is absolutely necessary that she should hear them to-night. Now is it not better that she should hear them from your lips than from mine or from my lawyer's? Would she not suffer less to have the truth told her gently here, in private, by the lips of her father, than out there, in public, by the lips of a stranger?"

While Ran spoke John Legg sat with his gray head bowed upon his hands in deep, sorrowful reflection, and when Ran ceased to speak the poor father made no reply.

"What do you think about this, Mr. Legg?" gently persisted Ran.

"I don't know! I don't know!" moaned the old man in a heartbroken tone. "What do you say, Julia?" he piteously inquired, raising his head and appealing to his wife.

She took his hand again, and looking tenderly in his troubled face, answered gravely:

"I think, John, indeed, I think, that you had better do as Mr. Hay advises. It would be dreadful for that poor girl to hear of her misfortune facing all those people in there! And you know the man who betrayed her and committed countless other crimes must be exposed in public and then expelled from the house."

Julia Legg spoke as she thought, but, in fact, Ran had no intention of turning the wretch in question out of doors in this freezing winter night.

"Julia, my dear, I have such confidence in your judgment that I will do as you say," replied John Legg in a low voice. Then turning to Ran, he said:

"Mr. Hay, I am deeply grateful to you for all the aid and comfort and counsel you give me. You may, sir, if you please, bring or send my poor child to me."

"I will do so at once," said Ran, and he arose and left the room.

"And I will stand by you through all, John. I will be as good a mother to your unhappy girl as I am a true wife to you," said Julia, still holding his hand in hers.

CHAPTER XXV.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

And so they waited in suspense for a few moments until the door opened and Mr. Leegh entered, as usual, with his head thrown back, his nose in the air, and his sister on his arm. His head was bowed upon her breast, and her face was pale and her eyes red and swollen.

John Legg arose and went to meet her with trembling nerves and outstretched arms. He was but a little over fifty years of age, yet for the last few hours he looked to be over seventy.

"My dear, dear Lyddy! My own poor child!" he said, drawing her to his breast and holding her there, while he put out his hand to his son and said:

"How do you do, Clay?"

"I am well, sir, thank you. How do you do yourself?" inquired the dutiful son in an offhand, nonchalant manner.

"As you see me, Clay. Not very well," replied the grieved father, as he sank into a large cushioned chair that his wife had pushed up to him, and drew his daughter down upon his lap with her head against his shoulder, where she lay sobbing her soul forth in pride and anger—not in love or sorrow. She had not spoken one word as yet since she entered the room.

"Clay Legg, as we must henceforth call him, because it is his only right name, threw himself into another arm-chair and said:

"I am told, sir, that you have something to communicate to us."

"Yes, I have, Clay. Do not cry so. Lyddy, my dear. I will stand by you. Your father will stand by his daughter, and love her and comfort her, and shelter and protect her against all the world," he said, turning away from his insolent son and bending over his wildly hysterical daughter.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Clay Legg, "since you have something to communicate, hadn't you better communicate it?"

"Yes," replied his father, with a sigh.

"But first," exclaimed Clay Legg, "here is a stranger present. Are we to discuss private family affairs before a stranger? And who is that person, anyway?" he demanded, jerking his thumb in the direction of Mrs. Legg, who had retired to a short distance and where she sat down.

"Oh, I ought to beg her pardon! For the moment I forgot. Julia, my love, will you step this way?"

Mrs. Legg came promptly at her husband's request, and stood before the group.

"My dear Julia, this young man here is my son, Clay, whom you have never seen before. Clay, this is Mrs. Legg, my wife, your new mother. I hope you will be the best of friends!" pleaded the husband and father.

"Indeed, I hope so, too!" earnestly responded the new wife, as she held out her hand with hearty good will to her stepson.

He drew himself up stiffly and bowed, ignoring her offered hand.

John Legg noticed his manner and frowned with pain, not anger, and to cover the awkwardness, said:

"And this weeping girl on my bosom is my daughter, Lydia! She cannot speak to you yet, my dear. She has not even spoken to me, her father, whom she has not seen before for the last three years! But she will be better presently, and then I feel sure that you and she at least will be good friends."

"Yes, indeed, John! I know we shall!" heartily responded Julia.

"Now sit down, my dear, and make yourself comfortable. You already know that I have a painful revelation to make to my son and daughter here; but as the misfortune to be spoken of was caused by no conscious complicity of theirs, it should not cause either of them too much grief, I think."

"No, indeed! It was not their fault, so they should not mourn over it," warmly assented Julia.

"See here, sir! Are you going to discuss private family matters in the presence of this person?" demanded Clay Legg.

"This person,' sir, is my beloved wife. I have no secrets from her. She already knows as much as I do myself, and as much as I have to tell you," replied John Legg, speaking for the first time with some severity.

"Tell me one thing, if you please, sir."

"What is that?"

"Am I personally concerned in what you are about to communicate in the presence of a stranger?"

"No, not personally—not at all interested except through your sister."

"Then that is her concern. If she choose——" And he turned on his heel and left his sentence unfinished.

"You had better let me go, John, dear, if the young people object to my presence during this interview," said Julia gently.

"My daughter, do you object to my wife's presence here while I make the revelation of which she knows the whole nature?" whispered John Legg to the agonized girl on his bosom.

"Oh! why should I object to anything? I know—before you tell me—that your dreadful news—concerns some crime of my wretched husband! If not a murder, that would hang him, then a forgery or some other felony that will send him to penal servitude, and will, in any case, be known all over England to-morrow. Let whom you like hear the horrid story," replied the woman.

When she first began to speak she gasped and panted, but as she went on she gained more command over her voice.

Julia Legg was full of pity for this ungracious creature, and she came and knelt down beside her husband's chair, and took his daughter's hand in hers and kissed it, murmuring softly:

"Believe me, oh! believe me! I will do all in my power to lighten any trouble you may have, and to make you comfortable and contented, if not happy."

Lamia—as we must continue to call her because that is the name by which the reader has known her from the first

—Lamia drew her hand away from the kindly hands that clasped it, and Julia Legg, with a sigh, arose and resumed her seat.

“My own dear daughter, before I tell you anything more I must remind you again that in my heart and in my home you have a haven of peace and love, of rest and safety from all the storms of life. Do you not know and feel this, my daughter?”

“Oh, yes; you are my father, and that is understood,” she answered coldly, as if a parent’s boundless love, pity and forgiveness were such mere matters of course that they needed no recognition. “But I wish you would tell me at once, and be done with it. What has my miserable husband, Randolph Hay, done?” she demanded.

John Legg sighed deeply. He did not think “how sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child,” because he had never seen the lines, but he sighed more than once as he answered:

“In the first place, my daughter, your miserable husband, as you call him, is not Randolph Hay, and has not a shadow of a right to that name or to the estate of Haymore.”

Lamia started up and looked her father in the face.

“Who and what is he, then?” she fiercely demanded.

“An adventurer with many aliases; a fraudulent claimant of the Haymore estates, who has sustained his false position by robbery, forgery and perjury, but who has been recently detected, and who is about to be exposed and punished.”

“I am not surprised! I am not surprised! I expected something like this! I did! I did! Tell me, does Mr. Will Walling know anything about it?”

“He knows all about it. His business in England is to bring that man to justice.”

Lamia sprang from her father’s arms, throwing him suddenly back by the violence of her motion, and began to walk wildly up and down the floor, exclaiming and gesticulating like a maniac, and thinking only of herself and of her own interests, and of no one and nothing else under the sun.

“To bring me to this! Oh, the villain! the villain! But I will have nothing more to do with him! I will never speak to him again! I will never look on his face again!

"Do you hear me, papa?" she cried, suddenly pausing, with flashing eyes, before her father's chair. "Do you hear me, I say? I will never live with that felon again—never speak to him—never look at him!"

"My child, you are quite right in your resolution. It would be wrong and even criminal in you to do otherwise," said John Legg, gently drawing his daughter into his arms again and adding sorrowfully, "for I have something more to tell you."

"You could not tell me anything more shameful than you have already told me! Even if you should prove that that villain had been a murderer, as well as a robber, forger and perjurer, it would not be worse, since hanging is no more disgraceful than penal servitude. To be the wife of a felon—the wife of a convict! But I will not be! I will be separated by law! I will be divorced!"

This she repeated over so often and with so much excitement that at last her father said to her:

"My poor child, you will not need to appeal to the law."

"What do you mean?" she demanded, impressed by the solemnity of his manner.

"You will not require a divorce," he replied.

"That is just, in effect, what you said before. Why will I not require a divorce? The man is not dead, nor going to die! He will not commit suicide. No, indeed, trust him for that! He is too great a coward! And he is in no danger of being hanged. How, then, should you say that I will not require a divorce, since death is not likely to relieve me of my felon husband—ugh!" she exclaimed in strong disgust.

"My dear, the man has never been your husband," he said slowly and distinctly.

"What?" she cried, aghast.

"The man has never been your husband!" he repeated firmly and solemnly.

"You are mad! We are all mad together, I think! What—under—heaven—do you mean?" she cried, staring at him with starting eyes.

"This man, under his true name of Kightly Montgomery, married Jennie Campbell, the daughter of the curate of Medge, in Hantz, more than two years before he ever saw your face. His wife is living now. She is in the drawing-

room across the hall. My wife Julia here knows all about this first marriage."

While John Legg spoke his daughter stared as if her eyes would have started from out their sockets. Then suddenly she sprang up and rushed across the room to the side where her brother sat with one leg crossed over the other, his head thrown back, and his hands clasped above it, his face wearing a cynical expression.

She paused before him, her eyes flaming.

"Cassius!" she said in a voice half choked with raging hatred and longing revenge. "Cassius, do you hear what papa has said? Do you hear that your sister has been deceived, betrayed by the basest of dastards and criminals! Cassius, kill that man! kill him! kill him! kill him!"

Clay Legg burst into a low, cynical laugh.

"Don't let us be tragic, whatever we are, Lyddy. It is a pity you have been such a fool as to be so easily taken in. A greater pity that you should have brought discredit on your family. But you are not the first woman who has ever been fooled and laughed at. But as for me getting into a broil with the fellow on your account—no, thank you! It would be unbecoming to the cloth, and get me into trouble with the bishop. And as to killing him! Do you really think I propose to do murder and get myself hanged for your folly? No, thank you, I say again! You had better go and hide yourself down in the greengrocer's shop at Medge along with papa and stepmamma, while I shall leave the country where my sister's conduct has made it impossible for me to hold up my head and look honorable men in the face."

While this brutal brother spoke his sister stood before him pallid, staring and biting her lip until the blood flowed.

"Shame on you, dastard, to speak to the unhappy girl in such a manner! Leave the room, sir!" said John Legg, rising and opening the library door.

"I did not want to come in here at first, and I am very glad to get out," retorted Clay Legg, with an insulting laugh, as he walked off.

John Legg shut the door after him and then turned to his miserable daughter. She had thrown herself down on a sofa, where she lay with her face in her hands.

He kneeled beside her and laid his hand on her head, murmuring softly:

"You must content yourself with our love and our poor home. These are yours forever. You have tried other love and found it fail you. Paternal love never fails," he continued, and while he spoke he did not cease to smooth and caress her head with his hand.

"And to think," she moaned in a muffled voice, with her face downward and hidden with her hands; "to think it was his deserted wife that I shopped for in the last days before my marriage with him—that it was his deserted wife with her child—his child—that came over in the same steamer with him and myself on our bridal trip! Ah! now I know why he got off the ship at Queenstown! It was to get out of her sight and to avoid encountering her father who was to meet her at Liverpool. She was his lawful wife, and knew it, and she knew then that I was—what was I?—what am I? Oh! I shall go mad! mad! mad!" she shrieked, flinging off her father's hand, springing from the sofa, clasping her head between her palms and walking wildly up and down the floor.

"My dear, dear child, don't go on like this! Come and sit down. Try to compose yourself," pleaded poor John Legg, walking after his daughter.

"Oh, hold your tongue! Let me alone! Don't I know what you are thinking in your heart all this time? You are saying to yourself that this is just what you always expected! Just what I deserved! You are glad of it in your heart! Glad to see me punished! Glad to see me mortified!" she cried fiercely, angry with her father because she was angry with herself, her betrayer and all the world.

"My dear Lyddy! My darling girl! I know you are not accountable for what you say now. I blame you for nothing, child, not even for your words. I could not have the cruelty to do it. But try to compose yourself and believe that we love you and will serve you and comfort you! Lyddy, my daughter, we cannot offer you the wealth and grandeur and luxuries that you have been lately used to, but, my dear, a safe home and solid comforts, and peaceful days and family affection you shall not lack, my girl—you shall never lack," pleaded her father; and while he spoke he followed her up and down with outstretched arms

ready to infold her, up and down, pleading with her, turning when she turned until at length she whirled around upon him and hissed at him through her set teeth, her hard words dropping like leaden bullets from the mold:

"Will—you—mind—your—own—business? I am of age! I thought I was Mrs. Randolph Hay, of Haymore! Lady of the manor here! I entered this house as its lawful mistress! For what? To find myself deceived, betrayed, entrapped! Now what am I! Something that must not even be named to respectable ears like yours!"

"Oh, my dear child! To me you are my wronged and blameless daughter! Well, rave on! I cannot help it, though it cuts my heart like a sword! Maybe it relieves you to talk like this. But presently I hope you will take thought and come home with me to be comforted," pleaded John Legg.

Lamia burst into a cruel, sarcastic laugh.

"The greengrocer's house on Market Street, Medge, of course, would be a perfect paradise to me! I can imagine the back parlor full of the fragrance of onions, leeks and other garden stuff from the shop, and enlivened with the music of the bell every time a customer opened the door! Not any for me, please! I may go on the stage, or on the street—why should I care where I go, what I do, or how I end—after this—so that I enjoy the pride of life in my prime?" she demanded, looking at the plain, good man before her with a cruel, sarcastic sneer.

He held out his arm to her, with a prayer in every look and gesture. He even ventured to lay his hand on her in tender compassion, but she broke away from him and resumed her wild walk.

Then he sank into an armchair beside him—he could follow her no further—and dropped his head upon his hands.

His wife Julia came to his side.

She has longed to go to him while he was following and pleading with his daughter, and getting nothing from her but insult for love. She had longed to lead him away from the ungracious and unseemly strife with evil and to say to him: "Leave the thankless and reckless woman to herself to recover her senses, if she ever had any, and come with me and rest." But—she was a stepmother only to the

willful girl, and she must not interfere between father and daughter.

But now that he sat alone in the collapse of despair after fruitless effort, bowed down, down with sorrow and wounded affection, she came to him, put her hand on his shoulder, laid her cheek lightly on his gray head and murmured words of comfort.

"You have been very, very patient with her, dear, and you were so right! She has had a terrible blow to her pride, such as even the best of women could not bear with patience. How then should she?"

"Cruel words from one's child, my dear! Cruel words!" said the suffering father, shaking his head without lifting it.

"She was crazed by grief and shame. She did not mean what she said. She did not even know what she said—did not know it rightly, I mean! When she comes to her senses, John, she will be more sorry and ashamed of her conduct to you than she is now of her downfall, and she will be grateful for your love and Christ-like patience with her. Her present mood is hysteria—frenzy! Give her time!"

"She threatened to go on the stage or on the street!" exclaimed John, uttering the last three words with a deep groan.

"She does rave worse than any other hysterical woman I ever heard, to be sure, for, as a rule, they only threaten to 'go mad' or to 'kill'; but it is all raving! there's nothing in it! You have been very patient and forbearing with your willful and provoking girl in this time of her suffering and excitement. Continue to be so, and you will have your reward in her penitence and affection. Believe it, dear."

"'Blessed are the peacemakers,'" quoted John Legg. "Come and draw a chair and sit by me, Julia, my dear. Your presence alone is very calming, even when you do not speak, though your words are always good and comforting and your voice sweet and pleasant."

Julia Legg seated herself beside her husband and took his hand in hers.

Lamia, having exhausted herself by her fury, fell down again upon the sofa and buried her face in the cushions.

And now in the silence that ensued John Legg became conscious of a growing disturbance in the drawing-room.

This might have been going on some time unnoticed by

the three persons in the library, who were absorbed in their own trouble; but now the disturbance on the opposite side of the hall was too evident to be ignored.

The sound of angry voices, hurrying steps and struggling forms reached their ears.

Lamia started up from her sofa and sat with her head bent forward, staring in the direction of the noise and listening intently, with a look of demoniacal satisfaction and expectancy on her face.

Julia cowered and clung for protection to the husband whom she herself had just been comforting.

He patted her head to reassure her, and then said:

"There, let me go, dear, and see what is the matter in there," gently trying to release himself from her clasp.

"Oh, no, no!" cried Julia, clinging closer than before. "Pray, don't leave us, John! Don't go into that room! Something dreadful is going on there."

At that moment a piercing shriek rang through the air, followed by a heavy fall that shook the house.

"I cannot stand this! Julia, I cannot stand it! I tell you I must run and prevent mischief if I can!" he urged earnestly, trying to free himself from her strong arms, but finding that he could not do so without using force and violence that must hurt her.

The confusion arose to uproar. A loud crash shivered on the floor, and a peal of fiendish laughter resounded through the building, and a woman's agonized cry went up to heaven for help!

Lamia, sitting on the sofa, leaning forward, listening intently, now broke into a low, demoniacal chuckle.

"Julia!" exclaimed John Legg, breathing hard through excitement. "I hate to hurt you, but I must prevent murder."

And he wrenched her arms from around his neck, threw her back in the armchair and rushed from the library to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XXVI

A TERRIBLE SCENE

WE must now explain the cause of the parlor storm. It came on in this way:

All the guests of Haymore Hall—with the exception of the Legg family in the library—were still assembled in the drawing-room.

The Campbell party, father, mother and daughter, still occupied the obscure sofa against the rear wall of the back division.

Judy and Will Walling were seated near, talking with them.

Dandy, Mike and Longman were standing on the rug before the fire, exchanging confidences on the affairs of the evening.

Gentleman Geff reclined, stupidly staring, on a divan in the recess of the front bay window, and occasionally drew from his pocket a large flask, which, with trembling hands, he uncorked and put to his lips.

Ran walked about from one group of friends to another, trying to seem at ease, but too surely in a state of intense anxiety.

Presently he took heart of grace and went up to the group on the sofa, touched the Rev. James Campbell on the shoulder and said:

"Come with me, please, reverend sir; I wish to consult you."

The rector arose and drew the arm of his host within his own and walked away with him. They did not leave the drawing-room, but went slowly up and down its length for the first few minutes in silence.

Ran did not seem to know how to open the subject he had on his mind. So it was the rector, after all, who, probably divining the nature of his friend's difficulty, was the first to speak and to speak to the point.

"The hour is late, and something should be done with that——" He paused, unwilling to use the words that arose to his lips, and he indicated the inebriate by a movement of his thumb.

"Yes," said Ran, "that is what puzzles me. It was of that I wished to talk with you."

"Go on then! Let me have your views. It is late, as I remarked before, and I should have taken my wife and daughter home an hour ago, but that I did not wish to leave you until something should be settled in regard to this man."

"But you will not leave us to-night? Rooms have already been prepared for you!" exclaimed Ran.

"My dear young friend, I thank you heartily, for myself and my womenkind, but we must return to the rectory to-night. My daughter has left her young babe there," replied the rector.

"But it is so late."

"But the distance is so short."

"Do oblige us by staying, Mr. Campbell."

"My dear Mr. Hay, don't you see it is impossible, much as I thank you?"

"Well, I am sorry. So will Judy be."

"And now about the disposition of this—Montgomery?"

"Yes," sighed Randolph Hay.

"What do you intend to do?"

"I do not know, sir. I want you to tell me, if you please. I might send for a constable to take him to the lockup house, as they call it here; but I do not like to do that. I might send him in a carriage to the village tavern, but I think he would drink himself to death there; or I might give him a bed here for the present, and indeed this is what I would rather do."

"Eh—what? Keep the fellow here?"

"For the present, yes."

"And in the name of common sense—why?"

"Well, to keep him out of harm's way."

"My good young friend, you did well to take counsel with me. You would have done well to take counsel of any sane man on such a subject."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I begin to suspect that you need a trustee for your estate and a guardian for your person!"

"I don't understand you!"

"Listen, then! That fellow deserves to go to prison. He might be sent to the village inn. But, my friend, he must not be allowed to spend so much as one night under your roof. To let him do so would be an act of insanity."

"But why?"

"For more reasons than one. In the first place, he is the fraudulent claimant of your name and estate, though his claim will not bear an instant of light, a ray of truth, let in upon it; yet your allowing him to remain in the house

to which he came as its pretended master, would seem, to him at least, to be giving some color to his pretensions. Do you see?"

"I see what you mean, but I am not afraid of anything he, poor wretch, may think or say or do. Is there any other reason why he should not be sheltered here?"

"Yes—not so strong a reason, to be sure; but a most decent one."

"Well?"

"He is a bigamist. He came here bringing a cruelly deceived, falsely married woman, who was never, therefore, wife or bride. She, not 'Mrs.' anybody, but Miss Legg, is here in your house under the charge of her parents, who are your guests. Therefore it would be unseemly—to use the mildest term—for him to remain under the same roof. Do you see now?"

"Oh, yes, I see. How oblique one's vision is at times, however. Well, Mr. Campbell, you have told me what I must not do with him; will you now tell me what I may?"

"Certainly. If your merciful spirit shrinks from passing him over into the hands of the law, you can have him put into a carriage and taken to the village inn—"The Red Fox," Giles Scroggins, host."

"I will do so, and hold myself responsible for his expenses there," said Randolph Hay.

And then both men looked toward the divan in the front bay window, on which lolled Gentleman Geff, very drunk and getting drunker every instant, for he now had the big flask turned up to his mouth, with his head thrown so far back that he was evidently draining the last drop of its contents. When he had done so, he made a futile attempt to restore the empty flask to his pocket, but instead let it fall to the floor, while he dropped back into his lolling position.

It was at this moment that Clay Legg strode into the drawing-room, fresh from his humiliating interview with his father, smarting under the disclosure of his sister's dishonor.

He strode past all the guests in his way, and straight up to the side of his late friend and patron, Gentleman Geff, struck his hand heavily on the drunkard's shoulder, shook him roughly and said:

"Do you know, you brute! you devil! what is before you?"

Gentleman Geff opened his heavy red eyes and stared in a deep stupor, through which fury began to kindle slowly, like flame from under a thick smoke.

"Answer me, you beast!" demanded Legg, with another and rougher shake of the wretch under his grasp. "Do you know what is before you?"

"No! nor care!" roared the madman, with a perfect stream of profanity and obscenity.

"Then listen to me!" said Legg, when at length the torrent from Tartarus was stayed. "What is before you is first a trial for bigamy, with fourteen years of penal servitude, with hard labor, bread and water, ball and chain, dark cell and frequent flogging thrown in!"

Gentleman Geff answered this by a glare of hatred and defiance and another inundation from the River of Styx.

Legg waited until that flood was exhausted and then added:

"Nor is that all! For when your first term of penal servitude shall be served out, another indictment will await you for conspiracy, perjury, forgery and fraud, by which you sought to gain possession of the Haymore estate, and another fourteen years, at least, of imprisonment, hard labor, stripes, chains and the rest!"

Again Gentleman Geff opened his lips in a way that made his mouth seem the opening of the pit of fire and brimstone for the blasting curses that issued from it.

And again Legg waited in sarcastic silence until the smoke and flame had sunk down, and then he added:

"If you should live through your second term you will have served twenty-eight years and you will be near sixty years of age—a very hoary-headed sinner, indeed! And yet, at the end of that time, the United States will want you on a charge of highway robbery and attempted murder, and will get you under the international extradition treaty. And you will pass the remainder of your guilty life in an American prison, where not only are the strong and rebellious criminals compelled to labor, but the aged, the infirm, and the invalids are scourged and driven to hard work, until they drop dead (if all tales be true). 'Do you like the picture?'"

A blast of fury, profanity and indecency, more diabolical than all that had preceded it, stormed from the mouth of the madman, and raved like a whirlwind around the ears of the listener.

When this had died of its own frenzy, Legg spoke again and for the last time.

"Do you know, you fiend, who are here? I will tell you! The witnesses who will convict you of every crime known to mankind. There on the sofa, at the opposite end of this room, a little in the shadow, sits your wife, Jennie Montgomery, whom you married, deserted and afterward stabbed, and left for dead in the streets in New York. There she sits between her mother and father, all three bent on prosecuting you to the full extent of the law! Look attentively and you will see them! There, talking with Lawyer Walling, is Randolph Hay, your benefactor, who saved you from starving and shared his hut with you in the mining camp of Grizzly Gulch, and whom you robbed, tried to murder and left for dead in the Black Woods of California so that you might claim his name and place with impunity! He will be compelled to prosecute you! And across the hall, in the library with her father, is the woman you deceived into a false marriage. She will prosecute you with all the vim, venom and virulence of a proud, outraged and revengeful woman. That is, if she does not prefer to execute you with her own hands."

Clay Legg should have known the dangerous wild beast he was goading to madness, yet he went on with a strange fatuity.

Gentleman Geff had followed with his eyes the index of Clay Legg to the distant sofa, on which sat the wronged wife, Jennie Montgomery, between her father and her mother. He had slowly but surely recognized her, stared at her in stupid dismay until he was again stung to fury by the insulting words of Clay Legg, when he turned his kindling eyes on the face of the man who was drawing such a degrading picture of his fate. It seemed then that it only needed the cessation of the sound of the speaker's voice to break the spell that held the demoniac; for no sooner had it ceased than he sprang to his feet with a terrible roar and hurled himself toward Legg.

But the latter saw his peril with the speed of lightning

and fled away, leaving others to brave the storm he himself had raised.

In an instant the maniac was raging in the midst of "the goodlie company," and all was fear, panic and confusion.

Little Mike, unhappily, was nearest to the madman and first to attempt to pacify him. But the demon caught up a heavy astral lamp from the table nearest to him and shivered it upon the head of the willing peacemaker, who fell like a slaughtered sheep.

Judy's shrieks of agony rang out upon the air, and brought the terrified servants to the drawing-room doors.

The demoniac sprang upon the table and seized a heavy chair, which he whirled around his head, threatening all who approached.

Ran and Longman sprang upon the table and threw themselves upon him.

It was at this moment that John Legg, startled by the screams of the women, entered the drawing-room, through the side door leading from the hall.

Yes, it was pandemonium that met the horror-stricken eyes of the man. Can I possibly show you the scene as he beheld it?

As he stood in the doorway, on his left, near the bay window in the upper end of the room, high on the table stood the athletic form of the demoniac, raging and foaming, cursing and threatening in the frenzy of *mania a potu*, swinging aloft the heavy chair which he whirled around his head with the swiftness and velocity of a windmill. On the same table stood Samson Longman and Randolph Hay, struggling to master the maniac, who seemed possessed of the strength of seven devils.

On the floor, near the middle of the room, lay Michael Man, stunned by a wound in his head, prostrate and insensible. Near him were scattered the fragments of the astral lamp that had evidently been the instrument by which his skull had been fractured. Beside him sat Judith Hay, with his wounded head on her lap. She was weeping and wailing, giving full vent to her grief and horror after the manner of her warm-hearted, impulsive race. Beside him on the opposite side knelt the Rev. Mr. Campbell, with a bowl of water and a napkin, washing the blood from the cut.

Away back in the lower end of the long room, on a shady

sofa, sat Mrs. Campbell and her daughter, Jennie Montgomery, clasped in each other's arms, with their heads hidden on each other's shoulders, too much shocked, horror-stricken, terrified to help, to speak or even to move. From under the same sofa peered the pallid face and staring eyes of Dandy Quin, who had evidently sought that lowly refuge "as the safest place at the crack of doom" for a poor little old man.

Neither Clay Legg nor Will Walling were to be seen anywhere.

ALL this, which has required some time to describe, was taken in at one view by John Legg. And for one instant he stood in doubt where first to offer help; whether to jump—but no; honest John's jumping days were over—whether to scramble up on the table and help to subdue the maniac possessed of a legion of devils, or to kneel down by the side of the minister to serve if he could the wounded man. In another moment the doubt was decided for him.

Ran succeeded in getting both his hands around the throat of the demoniac, which he held as in the grip of death, while Longman wrenched and twisted the heavy, murderous missile from his hands and dropped it on the floor and then closed with him in a conquering clasp. But it took all his strength, as well as all of Ran's, to hold the infuriate, now that his arms were free.

Feeling sure that the maniac was conquered, John Legg turned his attention from the scene of conquest on the table to the scene of suffering on the carpet.

"Is the young man dangerously wounded?" he inquired in a low tone of Mr. Campbell.

"We hope not. We hope this may be only a scalp wound. But it will be impossible to tell until there is a surgical examination," replied the minister.

"Has a doctor been sent for?"

Yes; Mr. Walling has gone out to dispatch a servant for Mr. Hobbs, the village practitioner."

"Oh, me poor Mike!" cried Judy, breaking afresh into sobs and tears and dialect. "Me poor, dear, darlint bhoys! Sure he was born to have the head av him broke. Sure, it's not the first time, though it's the worst. But, afther all, it is not so bad broke as me own dear Ran's was, be the same token, and be the hands av that same murthering thaif

av the wurruld! Oh! wirra! wirra! It was not enough that he kilt me dear Ran intirely, but now he must kill me poor Mike!" wailed Judy until her words were drowned in a flood of tears.

Mr. Campbell gazed in astonishment for a moment. In this wild Irish girl, giving full swing to her emotions and her brogue, he could scarcely recognize the quiet gentlewoman he had known now for some hours as Mrs. Randolph Hay. But he quickly recovered himself, and atoned for his involuntary rudeness by withdrawing his gaze and offering the gentlest words of consolation.

In the meantime the struggle on the table was continued in grim silence. The opponents saving all their wind for their strife until, as they swayed back and forth, the equilibrium of the board was overbalanced, and table and men fell together to the floor with a loud crash that called forth shrieks from the women.

For one moment the three men rolled together in a knot on the carpet, and the next Gentleman Geff lay flat on his back, with Longman's knees on his chest and hands around his throat.

"Ran!" exclaimed the hunter, "take my handkerchief out of my coat pocket and tie the feet of this wild beast!"

Ran immediately tried to obey. He drew the large red bandanna from Longman's pocket, found it strong enough for its purpose, and went around and took hold of the feet of the prostrate madman, but he immediately received a shower of kicks upon his chest that knocked him breathless.

Seeing that, Longman raised his voice again.

"Mr. Legg, come here! We haven't got a man to deal with, but a devil, and a rum-maddened devil at that!"

Legg immediately rushed to the rescue.

"Have you got a scarf or a handkerchief? A good strong one. All right! Tie this brute's fore paws together while I hold him down. Samson, my namesake, what amazing strength rum and madness gives a brute!" panted Longman, when he had finished his labor and arose to his feet.

The conquered demoniac lay bound and gagged on the floor, his murderous limbs helpless, his blasphemous tongue speechless. Yet still he writhed, tossed and floundered like some huge, stranded sea monster.

The distressed group gathered around Michael Man were

obliged to wait in quietness for the arrival of the doctor, for they dared not even move the wounded man lest they should do him a fatal injury.

Dr. Hobbs came at last, and being a country practitioner, he brought his medicine chest as well as his surgical case with him.

He was a tall, lank, red-haired young Yorkshireman, fresh from the London colleges, who had lately succeeded to the practice of his father, an aged, retired physician of the place.

He found two patients to be treated, one in as dire need as the other.

But after hearing a brief account of the occurrence from Mr. Randolph Hay, he gave his first services to the youth, Michael Man.

The bleeding wound in his head was of itself bringing back the consciousness of the wounded lad.

Dr. Hobbs knelt by his side and made a careful examination of his injuries, and then he told the anxious friends that they were not dangerous, only a deep scalp wound and a very slight fracture of the skull.

He washed and dressed the wound there on the spot, and then directed that the youth should be taken to his room, undressed and put to bed.

A narrow mattress was brought by two menservants, who laid it on the carpet, lifted the wounded youth tenderly, laid him on it and so bore him out of the drawing-room and up the grand staircase to his chamber on the third floor, followed by Dr. Hobbs and Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay.

By the time Michael Man was carefully undressed and comfortably settled in bed he recovered his faculties sufficiently to recognize the situation and speak to those around him.

"Don't ye be frightened, Judy, darlint," he murmured feebly to his pallid, distressed sister, who was bending anxiously over him.

"Sure, and I'm not, Mike, dear. Yourself will be all right soon," she replied, putting much constraint upon herself.

"Troth, and I'm all right now. So the redskins did come and attack the fort, afther all. But the colonel was aquil to the blackguards," he added.

And then the doctor perceived that he was becoming delirious, and he administered a sedative. When the patient had grown quiet again the doctor left him, with his sister Judy sitting by his bed, and went downstairs to the drawing-room to attend to the other case waiting for his treatment.

There he found the demoniac still lying on the floor, bound hand and foot. Longman, Dandy and Mr. Campbell were standing around him. They had taken the gag from his mouth, but he was breathing heavily. He had suffered the usual reaction in *mania apotu*, from violent frenzy to deep coma.

The men around him made way for the young doctor, who knelt down beside him, looked into his face, felt his pulse and his heart, and even lifted the heavy, half-closed lids of his swollen eyes. Then he rose and said:

"I think you may unbind him with safety now; he will not be in a condition to assault any one or do any harm for many days to come, if he ever should."

At this moment Ran re-entered the drawing-room and reported Mike as sleeping quietly.

Then, in the kindness of his heart toward his fallen foe, he stooped and examined the condition of Gentleman Geff, whom Longman had just unbound and straightened out, and who was now lying relaxed and limp on the carpet.

"Now, Mr. Campbell," said Ran, standing up, "you see that we have no alternative than to put this poor wretch to bed in the house here."

"Not so," said the rector. Then turning to the doctor, he inquired: "Will it be safe to remove this man immediately to my house—to the rectory, that is? The distance is short, you know."

"It will be perfectly safe, sir," replied the physician.

"Then, Mr. Hay, I shall be much obliged to you for the use of a spring wagon or cart and a mattress with pillows and proper covering to convey this man to the rectory," said Mr. Campbell, turning to his host.

"But, my dear sir, do you think of what you are about to do?" demanded Ran.

"Yes; my duty."

"But your daughter?"

"She need never see or speak to him or be troubled by him. Jennie is a very sensible, practical young woman;

always was so, like her dear mother. And her misfortunes—the result of her one act of imprudence—have made her even more so. Jennie will be no hindrance.”

“But why should you take so much trouble, make such a sacrifice, assume such a responsibility as to carry this stupefied madman to your quiet house?”

“Because, as I said before, it is my duty. I am a minister of the merciful Gospel, however much below that sacred calling, and must set an example of charity—practice some little of what I preach. The man is my daughter’s husband, however unworthy of her; my own son-in-law, however discreditable to me; and I must do my duty by him, however disagreeable to us all. My dear wife and daughter will give no trouble. There will be no scenes, no hysterics. They are good, true, strong women, and will sustain me in my action. But they need not go near the man. Longman, his mother and myself can take care of him. And now, my friend, will you order the conveyance?”

With a sigh and a gesture of deprecation, Ran went out to give the necessary directions.

There had been some delay caused by this discussion; but it did not matter to the unworthy subject of it; he was lying on the carpet in a dead stupor, and for himself was as well there as anywhere else; so there was no hurry.

In less than half an hour a light spring cart, such as is used by expressmen, was brought around from the stables. It was drawn by two horses and furnished with comfortable bedding, and to this receptacle Gentleman Geff was conveyed in the arms of four men.

The rector and the doctor rode on the seat with the driver, and they took the road to the rectory.

Mrs. Campbell and her daughter, declining all Mr. and Mrs. Hay’s pressing invitations, set out in one of the Hall carriages for their home. Longman rode on the box with the coachman.

Mr. Walling, old Dandy and the Legg family were the only remaining guests at the Hall, and these declined to retire to bed.

CHAPTER XXVII

CLEARING SKIES

It was of no use to go to bed. The sun was rising.

Judy, leaving Mike fast asleep, came downstairs, summoned the housekeeper and gave directions for an early and ample breakfast.

Then she went into the library to look after the Leggs.

She found Lamia lying on the sofa with her face buried in the cushions. She lay perfectly still, so that she might be asleep, ashamed or only sulky.

Mrs. Legg lay back in her easy-chair, fast asleep.

John Legg sat in the great leathern armchair, with his hands clasped upon his knees and his chin bent upon his chest; he was awake, as deep sighs showed him to be.

Clay Legg was nowhere to be seen.

Judy was so calm and reassured now that, without once falling into dialect, she addressed herself to the old man.

"Mr. Legg, there have been bedrooms at the disposal of yourself and family all last night. I hope the servant, whose duty it was to do so, has not failed to let you know this or to offer to show you to your apartments?"

"No, madam, thank you. No one has failed to execute your hospitable orders; but who could go to bed in such a night as has been passed? No, madam; just as soon as my wife and daughter are a little rested we shall bid you good-by and take our leave of your hospitable home."

"I am sorry that such is your resolution; but as soon as Mrs. and Miss Legg shall awaken I hope you will ring a bell and a servant shall show you to your rooms, where, at least, you may have the refreshment of the toilet service before breakfast," concluded Judy, pleased with her victory over the brogue.

"You are very kind, madam, and we will avail ourselves of your offer," said John Legg, with a bow.

Judy smiled and left the library.

No sooner had the door closed behind her than Lamia reared her head like a serpent from the sofa and said:

"Well, then, ring the bell now. I am awake, at any rate, and I should like a bath and then breakfast to my

room. I shall not go down to the breakfast table to face a sneering pack of hypocrites."

John Legg sighed and rang the bell.

The commotion waked up Mrs. Legg, who yawned, rubbed her eyes and looked about her.

"Where are we? What place is this? How came we here?" she muttered.

And then she suddenly recollected the situation and circumstances and added:

"It's well I'm strong. John Legg, how have you stood it?"

"As well as man could, Julia, I hope. But here is a young woman come to show us to our rooms, where we can wash our faces before breakfast," he added, as a housemaid appeared at the door.

The three arose and prepared to follow the girl, who led them up the first flight of stairs to one of the best suites of rooms in the house.

When John Legg and Julia Legg had made their simple and hasty toilet, they went downstairs and into the drawing-room, where they found Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay, Mr. Will Walling and Dandy Quin awaiting them.

They greeted the party, and then John Legg apologized for the absence of his daughter as best he could.

Judy excused herself for a moment and went out immediately to speak to the housekeeper and order an excellent breakfast sent up to Miss Legg in her room.

Then she returned to her guests and conducted them to the breakfast parlor, where the morning meal was already laid.

After breakfast Mr. and Mrs. Legg took leave, and with old Dandy, who wept at parting with his friends, and with their daughter, closely veiled and silent, left Haymore Hall in a carriage proffered by Ran and drove to Chuxton, where they took the train for London, en route for Medge.

Clay Legg had not been seen since he had fled from before the face of the frenzied Gentleman Geff. He was afterward heard of in Wales, as a hanger-on to his father-in-law, under whose protection his wife and children had lived for some time past.

Michael Man's good constitution, excellent health and temperate habits were all so much in his favor that in a

few days he began to get well, and before the week was out he came downstairs and joined the family at their meals.

The rector came over every day to inquire after Mike and to bring reports of Gentleman Geff, who was at death's door with brain fever and not expected to recover. Longman, the colossus, was established in the sick room as his constant attendant. Elspeth remained at the rectory for the present. She would not leave the family under present circumstances. Meanwhile Randolph Hay had given orders to his bailiff, Prowt, to have the gamekeeper's cottage put in complete repair and refurnished for the Longmans.

Christmas came, and the young couple at the Hall sent invitations to their few intimate friends to come and spend the sacred festival with them. They were loyal to the humblest among these. They really invited not only Mr. and Mrs. Campbell and Mrs. Montgomery and Dr. Hobbs, but old Dandy from Medge and Longman and Elspeth from the rectory. Will Walling and Michael Man were still staying in the house.

The young doctor, the rector and his wife and daughter accepted the invitation, but Elspeth and Longman declined it on the ground that she would have to stay at home to mind the baby and he to attend to the sick man; but these were not the only reasons; they both felt that their presence, as even Christmas guests at the Hall, would be a social solecism; for as Elspeth said to her son:

"These generous young people from the woods of a foreign country don't know what they are a-doing of when they invite you and me to dinner, Samson! It might do well enough in the mines of the backwoods. But here! Why, bless 'em, if they go on in this way not a single soul among the country families will have a thing to do with 'em, if they are the lord and lady of the manor! But they'll find out better."

Longman fully agreed with his mother, and so he wrote his excuses for both.

Old Dandy Quin also wrote from Medge and begged to be excused on two pleas: the first that he was not able to make the long journey from one end of England to the other twice in ten days; and the second was that he wanted to eat his Christmas dinner with his new-found relatives. He added the information that he did not mean to carry out

his first intention of buying an annuity with his savings, but that he should go into partnership with his nephew, and that in the spring they should move into a larger house and increase their business.

He concluded with a piece of news that made Ran, Judy and Mike break into one of their shouting Grizzly Gulch laughs.

He wrote that poor Miss Lyddy Legg—and just think of the queenly and beautiful Lamia Leegh being called “poor Miss Lyddy Legg!”—was very brokenhearted, though she need not be, for it was not her fault that she had been taken in by a false marriage; and that everybody was as kind to her as kind could be, and that he himself—Dandy Quin—had so much respect and sympathy for her that he offered to marry her out of hand and make an honest woman of her and leave her all his property at his death! but that the poor, misguided and demented young woman, who did not know what was for her own good, had refused him with scorn and insolence. There!

Think of the vain and haughty Lamia Leegh receiving an offer of marriage from Dandy Quin!

Notwithstanding, or perhaps because of these “regrets,” Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay enjoyed their Christmas with the few friends who gathered around them.

In the morning they walked to the village church in company with Will Walling and Mike. They heard a good Christmas sermon from the Rev. Mr. Campbell and listened to some really fine music from the organ and grand anthems from the choristers.

After the service they shook hands with the rector and his wife and daughter and with Elspeth.

Longman was at the rectory keeping guard over the dying man.

That evening Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay entertained at dinner the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. Montgomery, Dr. Hobbs, Mr. Will Walling and Mr. Michael Man. And the festival passed off pleasantly, nor did Judy, nor even Mike, once fall into dialect.

When the Christmas holidays were over, Mr. Will Walling, having seen his friend and client, Mr. Randolph Hay, in quiet and undisputed possession of Haymore, prepared to take leave of the Hall and return to New York.

A few days before his expected departure he called Ran and said:

"Well, what are your plans?"

"We shall not leave Haymore until the spring," replied Hay.

"Well, give me half an hour in the library alone with you. I have something to talk about."

Ran followed his guest to the room of books and gave him a chair and took another.

Then, however, instead of seating himself, Mr. Will Walling went to one of the book shelves and took down a large, heavy volume bound in red cloth and gold.

"This," he said, as he laid it on the table and turned over the leaves, "is the last year's edition of 'Burke's Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland.'"

"Well?" carelessly inquired Ran.

"And this," continued the lawyer, as he paused at an open page, "is the genealogy of the Hays, of Haymore."

"Well?" again inquired Ran.

"I want you to look at it with me. I don't wish to bore you to go over the whole history, with its marriages, births and deaths, but only to notice this fact that runs through the whole, from your first known ancestor, Arthur Hei, who married Edda, a daughter of Seebold, Earl of Northumberland, down to your grandfather, the late squire, who married Gentil, daughter of Pharoah Cooper, of Esling Moor, Yorkshire."

"She was a gypsy, and the child of a gypsy," said Ran.

"Yes; still she is set down here as the daughter of a certain somebody. All your 'forebyes' have married the daughters of certain somebodies, from dukes down to gypsies."

"Well, but what does all this talk tend to?" demanded Ran.

"To this: It is too late for your name as Squire of Haymore to appear in this year's edition of the 'Landed Gentry'; the volume is probably already issued. But before long the *Herald College* will be getting up next year's edition, and you will receive letters or messengers inquiring for authentic statistics concerning your succession, marriage and so on."

"Well, they can have them," said Ran indifferently.

"Yes, but I am afraid there will be some awkwardness for you on one point.

"Which point?"

"That of your marriage."

"How should that be?"

"Why, in this way—listen. The items of entry in your case will be something like this:

"Hay, Randolph; born July 15, 184—; succeeded his grandfather as tenth squire, March 1, 186—,' (for you know that your succession will date from the day of his death); 'married December 2, 186—, Judith, daughter of ——' Whom? There's where the awkwardness would come in."

"I would say simply—Judith Man," replied Ran Hay.

"Very well—Judith Man, daughter of—whom? The *Herald's College* are very precise in these matters. You will have to find a father for her."

"Mr. Walling! If you were not my friend and my guest, I should be very angry with you. My sweet wife is a child of the Heavenly Father! but for an earthly parent of either sex I do not know where to look."

"Look here then, Hay, to me. I didn't mention the difficulty without having a remedy for it. I am a childless widower, as you know. And though it would be straining a point of probability to represent a man of thirty-seven as the lawful father of a woman of nineteen, still I would like to adopt your wife as my daughter, that she may be entered in the Red Book as Judith, daughter of William Walling, Esq., attorney-at-law, New York City. Come, Hay, my friend, you know I mean the best by you and by her. Now what do you say to accepting me as your father-in-law?" inquired Will Walling, with a laugh.

Randolph Hay paused before he replied. He was more pained than pleased. Yet he appreciated the lawyer's good intentions, and was grateful for them.

At length he answered:

"I thank you from my heart, Mr. Walling, for your intended kindness; and I feel grieved that I cannot accept your gracious proposal, since not to do so must seem so very ungracious as well as ungrateful to a friend whom I love and esteem as much as I do you. And yet I cannot accept it."

"But why not?" inquired the lawyer.

"I—do not know. I cannot tell. I have a feeling against it which I am unable to define or analyze."

"But I am not. I know the cause of your reluctance. It is because it would not be strictly true. That is it. You need not answer, Ran, my boy. But you must allow me to tell you that you are a little too scrupulous for a practical world, though I do not like you the less on that account," said Will Walling, with his usual little laugh.

"And I hope my scruples, as you call them, will not affect our friendship?"

"I have just told you that they will not. There, let the matter drop!" concluded the lawyer.

Judy never heard of the offer Mr. Will Walling had made to adopt her as his daughter for the sake of giving her a good antenuptial position, nor did she ever guess that there would be any awkwardness in the record of her marriage in the Hay, of Haymore, item of "The Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland." She was not troubled on that subject.

All the affairs of the Hays were so satisfactorily settled now that the young couple were only waiting for the departure of Will Walling to leave Haymore for London, where they might live in retirement in that great city until they should have fitted themselves to mingle with the more critical of their Yorkshire neighbors.

Early in the new year pleasant letters came from America. They were from Cleve and Palma Stuart, and brought news of the change of fortune that would take them to the mountain farm of West Virginia.

Ran and Judy were pleased, yet puzzled.

"I should have thought, if they left New York, they would have gone to that fine plantation in Mississippi," said Judy.

"So should I, and not to what must be a poor farm on the mountain," added Ran. And then turning to Walling, he added:

"You see you will have to take the documents, putting Palma in possession of the property I have made over to her, all the way to West Virginia."

"I will do that with pleasure. I have never yet seen the Alleghany Mountains," replied Will Walling, who was always ready to travel over any new ground.

It was nearly the first of February that Will Walling at length reluctantly made up his mind to take leave of his friends at Haymore.

In bidding them farewell he said:

"I cannot help regretting that you would not accept me for your father-in-law, Hay."

Ran only laughed in reply.

"What did he mean by asking you to be his father-in-law?" inquired Judy, after the dogcart that was taking Will Walling to the station had rolled away from the door.

"Oh, only his nonsense. You know, of course, that, as I have no mother nor he any daughter, he could never have been my father-in-law," replied Ran.

So Judy never suspected how it was.

But before many months Judy and Mike were claimed by a father with a pedigree which the most heathenish worshiper of rank might have been proud to acknowledge.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HOPE AND LIFE

"POLEY, dear darling, will you go with Cleve and me to West Virginia to live?" exclaimed Palma, running into the cabinet kitchen of her flat, where good Mrs. Pole was busy over the fire, baking those very muffins in which she so excelled.

Cleve had gone out to change the bonanza check to pay the rent and to give up the flat.

Poley paused, with a spoonful of batter held in her hand, halfway between the bowl on the table and the muffin rings in the pan on the range.

"What is that you said, my dear?"

Palma repeated her question.

"Will I go with you to Vest Wirginny? That's the furrin nation we was to war with, ain't it?" inquired Mrs. Pole, going on to fill her muffin rings.

"Don't mention the war, Poley. I cannot bear to talk of it."

"Well, I won't. But that Vest Wirginny—where is it? In New Orleenes?" inquired Mrs. Pole, whose ideas of geography were so vague that she once asked Palma if Africa was in the United States. And Palma, to spare the good woman's self-esteem, answered that Africans, or their descendants, had been in America for a couple of centuries. Whereupon Mrs. Pole had added that, of course, she knew that America was in the United States. Palma had not set her right, but ruminated in her own mind on the fact of the future when our national New Jerusalem would not make a part of the Western continet, but the Western continent would be only a part of the grand republic of the planet Earth. But this is a digression. Now to return.

"West Virginia is much nearer than New Orleans," replied Palma.

Mrs. Pole filled the last of her muffin rings and set the pan containing them on the range before she spoke again.

"And you and Mr. Stuart be going there to live, ma'am, you say?"

"Indeed, yes—and very soon, too."

Mrs. Pole put the bowl of batter in the cupboard, covered it over with a clean napkin and sat down, "to save her back," while her muffins were baking.

"For good?" she inquired.

"Yes, indeed, for good in every sense of the word, I do hope and believe. I will tell you all about it."

Mrs. Pole jumped up and ran into her little bedroom adjoining the kitchen, and brought out a small, low-backed rocker, saying to her little lady:

"There! Sit ye down while you talk. You have often enough told me to 'spare my back' whenever I could lawfully do so. And now I tell you to spare your own."

Palma laughed and dropped into her chair, and when Mrs. Pole had looked at her muffins and seen that they were doing well, and taken her own seat on a cane chair, Palma began:

"I will tell it to you as Cleve told it to me, for it is like a story, Poley. Here goes!

"Once upon a time there was an old man—a very rich old man—who lived in an old stone house at the foot of a mountain, called Wolfscliff, and the woods that clothed the side of the mountain were called Wolfswalk, because, when

the land was surveyed and the first house was built there was neither sleep by night nor safety by day, for the wolves. They carried off hens and geese and sheep and calves, and—horror to relate!—even the little negro babies. This was how the place received its name. The wolves were worse than the Indians. They could neither be fought off nor bought off, but had gradually to die off, like the Indians.

“So the name came down the generations to the time of Jeremiah Cleve, the old man with whom my story commenced, and who lived in an old stone farmhouse in the woods at the foot of the mountain—a house many times larger than the log cabin of his first American ancestor.

“This Jeremiah had married an heiress in his own neighborhood, and so had doubled his fortune.

“They had three sons.

“John, the eldest, was, according to the law of primogeniture then prevailing in Virginia, heir to the landed estate of his father. This John, when he was but twenty years of age, became engaged to be married to the beautiful daughter of the man who owned the nearest plantation to Wolfswalk. It was a long engagement, on account of the young fiancée’s extreme youth; but just when they were going to be married, when he was twenty-five and she was eighteen, she caught a severe cold while out sleighing with him, and died within a week of inflammation of the lungs. She was buried in her bridal dress, on her wedding day. It is said that on her deathbed he solemnly vowed himself to her, lover and husband, for time and eternity. That was seventy years ago, and he has kept his faith. He is now a lonely old man of ninety-five, the solitary master of Wolfsciff, waiting for the Lord to call him to join his bride in heaven.

“The younger sons, Charles and James, were, by the terms of the marriage settlements of their parents, co-heirs of their mother’s estate; and if there had been ten, they would have all been equal co-heirs, and each portion small; as there were but two, each portion was considerable.

“Charles was the first of the family to marry. He wedded a young woman of family and fortune, and went to live on his mother’s plantation. They had two sons. When these boys were old enough to be sent to college their mother sickened and died of typhoid fever, how contracted no one

ever could tell. Their father never married. His house was well managed by a capable young mulatto woman, who made it homelike to the boys when they came there to spend the vacation. At length, when the young men were relatively twenty-two and twenty-four years old, their father also died, and the young men lived on the farm like true brothers until the Civil War broke out, when they entered the Southern army. Ah! poor, dear, brave boys! One fell at Fredericksburg, the other at Cold Harbor. Truly 'the glory of this world passeth away.'

"I come now to the youngest of old Jeremiah's sons—James, who was Cleve's grandfather—his mother's father. He had a passion for the military life, and he entered the army. When he had gained his commission as second lieutenant of infantry, he married Molly Jefferson, a relation of the illustrious Thomas.

"By this time the aged couple, Jeremiah and Josephine Cleve, had passed on to a higher life, and John, their eldest son, a man passed middle age, reigned at Wolfscliff in their stead.

"John, a lonely man, invited the young couple to make their permanent home with him, and they did so until the Mexican War broke out, when the young lieutenant had to follow Gen. Scott to Mexico. His young wife would gladly have accompanied him 'even to the battlefield,' but she was then nursing her first—and only—child, a baby girl not a month old, when the young husband and father went away to the war, from which he never came back again.

"The tidings of his death in the battle of Chapultepec came to Wolfscliff as a death blow to the youthful widow. She pined and died within the year, leaving her infant daughter, Cara, to the charge, yes, rather to the heart of John Cleve. He brought up and educated the orphan and, when she was grown, went out into the world for her sake.

"In a winter they passed in Washington they met young Mr. Stuart, of the Cypresses, Mississippi. A mutual attachment between the young people was approved by John Cleve. And the next summer Mr. Stuart, of Mississippi, and Miss Cleve, of Virginia, were married at Wolfscliff. They went on an extended wedding tour which filled up all the summer and autumn months, and only returned to the husband's home in Mississippi in time for the Christmas

holidays, when they were joined by John Cleve, of Wolfsciff, who came at their—not invitation only, but prayer—to spend the winter with them.

“That was his first and last visit—not that he had not enjoyed it, nor that he ceased to love his dear niece, but that after her marriage he grew more and more of a recluse, a student and a dreamer.

“And she visited him all the more frequently that she could not induce him to leave his home. Instead of going to a gay summer resort when she migrated to the North every summer, she would go to Wolfsciff, until at length, when years passed and children came every year, and sickened every year, and she had to take them to the seaside, her annual visits to Wolfsciff were discontinued.

“Cleve, the youngest child, and the only one who survived his parents, was taken to Wolfsciff when he was about three years old. That was the first and last time he ever saw his granduncle. Of the tragic fate of Cleve’s father and mother you have heard me tell, Poley.”

“Oh, yes,” answered Mrs. Pole; “they were fatally hurt on the wreck of the *Lucy Lee*, I remember.”

“And after that, do you know that the aged John Cleve, of Wolfsciff, who sank deeper and deeper into solitary study and reverie, utterly lost sight of his grand-nephew, whom he was contented to think of as at school under the supervision of his guardian, Judge Barrn, or at college, or traveling in Europe, or on his Mississippi plantation, not knowing that the latter was a charred and blasted ruin and desert until the death, in battle, of his last nephew left him without an heir bearing the name of Cleve. Then he instituted inquiries for his grand-nephew, Cleve Stuart, but without the least effect.

“Accident at last revealed Cleve’s residence in New York. Mr. Sam Walling went to Washington on legal business and fell in with a Mr. Steele, of Wolfswalk, the nearest town to Wolfsciff, and, in the course of conversation, mentioned the sage of Wolfsciff and his vain quest for his nephew and heir, Cleve Stuart. Then Mr. Walling gave information, and the West Virginian went back to the mountains with the news the hermit was pining to hear.

“John Cleve immediately wrote the letter inviting Mr. Stuart and myself to come and make our home with him.”

"And you are going?"

"Yes, I told you so. Will you come with us?"

"To the end of the world. To the jumping-off place. And even there, if you should take the leap in the dark, I'll jump down after you."

"Dear Poley, I am so glad!"

"And why should I stay behind? And why should I not go? I have nieces and cousins here, to be sure; but they are all doing well. And though I love them, I think I love you more, for you do seem more like a child of my own than any of them do; and you seem to want me more than they can."

"I do want you more, Poley, darling. And Cleve is so anxious for you to go with us for me. Though I am now in excellent health, he seems to think I require a nurse to look after me as much as if I were a sick baby."

"And so you be, my dear, for this present time, and will be for some time to come," Mrs. Pole replied, nodding wisely.

"Oh, I am so glad you will come, Poley, dear. And listen. When I get settled at Wolfsciff next summer you can invite any of your relations, or all of them, as many as the house will hold, to come and stay with you. It will be such a pleasant, healthful change for them, from the crowded city to the fine, open mountains."

"It would be heaven for them to see it only for a day. Why, we all went up the North River and saw the hills only from the deck of the steamer, and they thought that was paradise, and longed to be in it. What would they say to staying a week among the mountains?" exclaimed Poley.

"Then they shall come. They shall all come," responded Palma delightedly.

"But, my dear child, what would the old gentleman say?" demurred Mrs. Pole.

"Oh, Poley, you don't know the Southern people. Neither do I, for that matter, except upon Cleve's showing. But I am sure I can guarantee you and yours a welcome at Wolfsciff. And mind, we won't have to send to market for meat, poultry and vegetables, nor to the grocer's for flour, and meal, and lard, and eggs, and such things. Nearly everything, except tea and sugar, pepper and salt, and such, are produced on the farm, and cost next to nothing," said

Palma, speaking as she believed and proving how little she knew of the cost of labor or the worth of time on a farm.

But Mrs. Pole, who was as ignorant of such a life as was her youthful friend, received every statement in good faith, and anticipated good days to come.

She looked once more at her muffins, made the tea, and then went into the parlor to set the table for luncheon.

Palma went into her bedroom to overhaul trunks and bureau drawers, to see what she could make of her scant wardrobe, in view of appearing among strangers in West Virginia. She had but three suits—the superb velvet dress given her by Mrs. Walling, which she thought could only be worn on grand occasions, and must be quite useless in the mountain farmhouse; the well-worn crimson cashmere now on her back, and in its very last days; the fine India muslin, now fairly embroidered, not with unnecessary fancy work, but with needful darns. These were all the dresses Palma owned, if we except the old, faded blue gingham wrapper in which Cleve had first found her in her garret.

“I must get Poley to sponge and press the crimson cashmere, and then that will do to travel in, and with care it may last the rest of the winter,” she said patiently, as she locked her trunk and her bureau drawers and returned to her little parlor, where she sat down to work on a doll’s dress, or what might have passed for such.

While thus engaged she sang a sweet nursery song that was a reminiscence of her own infancy.

Presently Cleve came in, smiling.

“Well, dear,” he said, “I have paid the rent and given up the rooms, though I had to pay another month’s rent in lieu of a month’s warning; and I have settled every other outstanding bill except the milkman’s. I could not find man or bill if I tried, I suppose.”

“No; there is no bill. We buy tickets, and pay cash, and we have seven tickets left.”

“Then the man can have the benefit, for we go away to-day.”

“From the city?”

“No; from the flat. We will go to a hotel to-night, and go to Washington to-morrow, en route for West Virginia. Can you pack up in that time?”

“I can pack up in an hour,” replied Palma.

As she spoke the hall boy knocked and entered the room, showing in a man with a bundle.

"Ah! that is all right, thank you—that will do," said Stuart as the man set down the box and went away.

"It is my new business suit for winter wear in the mountain farmhouse. What do you think of it, Palma?" he inquired, cutting the twine and unpacking the box and shaking out a suit of brown beaver cloth, consisting of double-breasted coat, vest and pantaloons.

"Oh! I think it is excellent. Such a rich, deep color, and such soft, thick, warm material," said the young wife appreciatingly.

"Yes, so it is—all that," added Mrs. Pole, who was setting the tea urn on the table. "But, la! what a blessing it is that women's clothes grows on 'em, like feathers do on to a bird, so they never has no trouble nor expense to buy any."

Stuart dropped his suit on the floor and looked at his wife in dismay, noticed her faded, shabby cashmere dress, and became contrite for his thoughtlessness.

Mrs. Pole said:

"Lunch is ready, ma'am," and hurried out of the room.

"Don't mind Poley, Cleve, dear. She is full of queer sayings, you know," said Palma conciliatingly. "Come now, and sit down to luncheon. Here are some of her nice muffins." And she took her seat at the table and began to pour out the tea.

"I have been an idiot, and a very selfish idiot at that! providing myself with a first rate suit of clothes, and even displaying them to your admiration, without once remembering that you also would require raiment. I am obliged to the woman for bringing me to my senses," said Stuart as he took his seat opposite his wife and helped himself to a muffin.

"Nonsense, Cleve! I have got a tongue in my head, and if I had wanted anything would have asked you for it without hesitation," replied Palma.

"I fear you would not have recognized any want, my dear; and I fear it is true that some men are so thoughtless that they act as if women's clothes grew on them like the petals of a flower, and cost neither money nor effort to re-

new. But I see now. Yes, dear rose of my life, I see your petals are fading."

No more was said until after luncheon, when Cleve put a fifty-dollar note in Palma's hand and said:

"Go out and get what is necessary for your comfort, my dear; and take some lady friend with you, for I fear you have very little experience in shopping."

"Thank you, Cleve," replied Palma, laughing; "but I shall take Poley. She will be a better judge of what I need than any of our fine lady friends."

"Well, perhaps you are right," admitted Stuart, and the discussion ended.

When Mrs. Pole had cleared away the table and taken her own luncheon Palma invited her to go on a shopping expedition; and they put on their bonnets and outer garments and started. Palma's was only the plush jacket that belonged to her cashmere suit, and she shivered so much as she walked that Mrs. Pole said:

"The very first thing that you must buy must be a heavy cloth coat. You can get one for twenty dollars. I should prefer a Scoach plaid shawl, but young people don't wear such things now, only neat-fitting coats, or sacques, or dolmans."

They went down on Broadway and into store after store, trying where they could find at once the cheapest and the best.

At length Palma was suited with a close-fitting heavy cloth coat that not only satisfied herself but also Mrs. Pole.

"Now, then, as you like it so well, keep it on, child, and have your plush jacket done up in a parcel and I will take it home," said the good woman.

And this was done.

But then they went to the suit department, where Palma selected an olive-green pressed flannel dress for herself, and had to take off her coat to try it on. Then she bought a beaver bonnet and a leather hand-bag, and her shopping was complete.

Mrs. Pole, who had saved up the wages she had received, bought a very heavy tartan shawl, two pairs of thick yarn stockings, a pair of stout goat-skin boots, a pair of warm woolen gloves, and a thick green berege veil, and felt her-

self provided for defense against the winter on the mountain farm.

When they reached home they found Stuart waiting for them. He said:

"Pray do not trouble to get dinner this evening, as we can dine at the hotel where we are to spend the night."

"I am very glad of that, on Poley's account for she is very tired. She insisted on bringing home all our purchases herself, and just look how she has loaded herself down!" said Palma, laughing, though, in fact, the two heaviest items of the purchases, namely, Palma's beaver cloth coat and Poley's tartan shawl, were worn home on the shoulders of the respective owners.

"But I must beg you to pack up as soon as possible, and I will help you, if you will show me how," he answered.

"That would be an awful hindrance, sir! Just let me get my breath for a minute and I'll be all right. I am not tired one bit. And we'll get through the packing in a jiffy! It's very easy to move when there's no furnitur', and nothing but one's clothes and things to pack," said Mrs. Pole, sitting down on the first chair, dropping her bundles on the floor, and untying the broad plaid ribbon strings of her big black straw bonnet.

She kept her word, for in five minutes she was on her feet again, and in less than an hour the trunks were packed, locked and strapped.

Stuart wrote the labels and pasted them on the tops, and they stood ready for the expressman.

Then the three put on their outer garments and turned to leave their flat.

Palma paused and looked back half regretfully.

"Good-by, pretty little home," she said. "We have been very happy in you, but you must not mind our going away. We shall have to go away from our bodies some of these days! But I hope you will have very pleasant tenants always. Good-by."

Stuart did not laugh at her, but Mrs. Pole did, and said as they went to the elevator:

"If I didn't know you as well as I do, child, I should really sometimes think you were crazy!"

"Oh, Poley! don't you know there is a soul in places and

in things, as well as there is in all other living creatures?" she answered.

Mrs. Pole did not reply, but thought within herself: "I do suppose as there be some of the sensiblest people crazy in spots."

They went down in the elevator; and what a misfit of words there is in that sentence!

They found the janitor waiting in the office to see them off. Mr. Stuart gave him the key of the vacated apartments, and they all shook hands with him and left, with the request that he would see to the delivery of their trunks to the expressman.

Then they walked down the street to the corner of the avenue where the cars passed. Mr. Stuart hailed the first down one, and they boarded it. They rode about the length of twenty blocks, got off and walked across town to Broadway, and entered the office of the hotel that Stuart had chosen for their sojourning place that night.

They were easily provided with rooms.

When Palma had taken off her bonnet in her chamber Mrs. Pole, who still stood up in her street costume, said:

"Now, ma'am, if you please, I must leave you for a little while."

"What, Poley dear! Is there any more shopping to do? Have you forgotten anything?" demanded Palma.

"No, my child! But as we are to start to-morrow morning I must go and take leave of my kinfolks to-night."

"Oh, Poley! And they live away downtown somewhere! And—you can never go alone!"

"Why not, child? I have been used to go alone all about the city all the days of my life, even when I was a young woman, and nothing ever happened to me, or even threatened to happen to me! And if nothing didn't in my youth, nothing ain't like to do it in my age! Don't be uneasy, child! I'll be back by ten o'clock, and one o' my nephies will see me here safe."

"But won't you wait until after dinner? Cleve says they keep a sumptuous table here."

"Then I hope you will get the good of it, my dear, but as for me, I must hurry away. I'll make up for missing of my dinner by eating a hearty supper when I come back."

"Take care, you must not risk a return of those horrid

nights you had at Lull's, you know," said Palma, with a sudden recollection of the sleep-walking and magpie-hiding propensities that had been features of those disturbed nights, though features that happily Mrs. Pole had never suspected.

"Oh, don't you be afraid! It was the cold, heavy pastry that did it at Lull's! There was no basket beggars to carry off the cold pie crusts and puddin's, and me and the girls used to eat 'em all up at night to keep 'em from being wasted on. And I never heard of their hurting anybody but me, either. But don't you be afraid. I shall eat nothing but the very best of nutericious and digesterable food, like stewed oysters and sich."

"Very well, Poley. Eat what you will, so it shall agree with you. And now don't fail to invite your relations in my name as well as in your own to come to Wolfsciff to see you next summer."

"Thank you, ma'am, for reminding me again. Now I know you are in airnest and I'll be sure to invite them."

"Why, Poley, I am always in earnest."

"To be sure, I know you are, ma'am, dear child," answered Mrs. Pole, divided in her style of address, between her respect for her mistress and her tenderness of her pet.

And then again she took leave and went out.

Cleve came out and escorted Palma down to dinner, where the many and slow courses occupied them for more than an hour.

At ten o'clock Poley punctually made her appearance, and ate a hearty supper of stewed oysters and brown stout with her nephew.

At eleven o'clock the whole party retired to rest.

CHAPTER XXIX

TO THE MOUNTAIN FARM

THEY rose early in the morning, breakfasted and drove down to Cortlandt Street ferry to take the boat for Jersey City.

They caught the eight-thirty train in good time and without hurry.

Stuart found their baggage all right, waiting for them, checked it to Washington, and then entered with his companions into the ladies' car, and the express train started on its Southern flight. Their journey was quick, pleasant and uneventful.

Early in the evening of that day they reached Washington.

Leaving their trunks in the baggage room at the depot, and taking only their hand-bags, they went to one of the best hotels, where they dined and engaged rooms for the night and the next day.

This was Palma's first sight of the capital of her country, and Cleve determined to linger a few hours to show her the public buildings.

The next morning Stuart engaged a hack and took his two companions for a long, circuitous drive, which should include visits to the White House, the State, War, Navy and Treasury Departments and the Capitol. But these visits were necessarily short. There was no time to pay their respects to the President in the Executive Mansion, or to listen to the debates in the Senate Chamber or in the House of Representatives, or to the cases in the Supreme Court. They had to get back to lunch and then to take the train for West Virginia.

Two o'clock in the afternoon found them again seated in the cars and flying westward.

Up to this hour the day had been clear and mild, but now the sky began to cloud over, and when they reached Alexandria the snow began to fall, and as they left the old town behind them and the short winter afternoon drew to a close, the storm thickened, if that could be called a storm in which there was no wind, but a cataclysm of snow falling directly, silently and continuously upon the earth.

Strange scenes were traced on the window panes without, weird, beautiful, fantastic scenes—cities, palaces, gardens, trees—all drawn in frosted silver. They fascinated the imagination of Palma, who was never tired of gazing and dreaming. Little or nothing could be seen through the storm of the country over which they were flying.

They reached Oaklands, on the Alleghanies, late at night. They had taken through tickets to the end of their railway journey, and the train was going on that night; yet, as the

storm continued, they determined to lay over until the next morning. Leaving their trunks on the baggage car to go on to their destination, they took their hand-bags and walked through the thickly falling snow to the hotel, where they were comforted by clean rooms, glorious hickory wood fires, and a delicious supper of venison steaks, broiled ham, buckwheat cakes, hot rolls, tea, coffee, and rich cream, and butter, and honey such as is seldom found anywhere.

It had been a fatiguing day, and as they could see nothing of the country for the snowstorm, they all went to bed and slept the sleep of the just.

The next morning they rose to a new life.

The storm had ceased. The sky was clear, and the sun was shining over a splendid, a magnificent, a dazzling world of mountains, valleys, fields and forests, all arrayed in white and decked with diamonds.

"Oh! Cleve," cried Palma, looking out from the upper window of her bedroom, "does it seem possible that only yesterday we were in a crowded city, not two hundred miles away, and that now we find ourselves in this magnificent scene? Why, Cleve, yesterday seems to be a thousand years behind, and this to be another planet!"

Her rhapsodies were interrupted by the breakfast bell.

And for all answer Cleve smiled, drew her arm within his own and led her down to the breakfast table.

There were some few other wayfarers present in the room, and these men were standing around the great, roaring wood fire and talking politics or crops. But they soon left their position and sat down at the board. Mrs. Pole was there, too, ready to join her friends.

"Did you ever dream of such a world as this, Poley?" whispered Palma as the three sat down in a row, Palma being in the middle.

"No, never in all my life! I never even 'maged as there could be such a place as this! And, oh! ain't it cold, neither?"

"Cold, but such a fine, pure, healthy cold. And the hot coffee will warm you, Poley."

The breakfast was in many respects a repetition of the supper, and in all respects equal to it.

"Seems to me I eat twice as much at every meal as I ever eat before in my life, and yet I feel hungry in an hour

aftr I have finished. I do believe if I was to live up in these regions I should have such an appetite I should think of nothing but eating and drinking from morning till night, and dreaming of nothing but eating and drinking from night till morning!"

"I wonder how long that would last?" queried Palma, but Mrs. Pole did not answer. She had turned her attention the the venison steaks.

As soon as breakfast was over the three put on their outer garments and walked through the main street of the mountain town to the railway station, where they had to wait for nearly half an hour for the Eastern train to come in. Then they took their seats on board of it, and were once more flying westward through the magnificent mountain world in its splendid winter garb of ice and snow.

All day long our travelers reveled in the glorious panorama that flew past the windows of their car, until night closed in and hid the scene from their vision.

It was quite dark when they reached the little way station of Wolfswalk, where they left the train, which stopped half a minute and then sped on westward.

It was too dark for our party to see anything but the few glimmering lights at the station and in the stable yard of the village tavern on the opposite side of the road, and the ghostly forms of the mountains looming through the obscurity.

"It is now seven o'clock, and we are three miles from Wolfsciff Hall. I shouldn't wonder if we have to spend the night at the inn here," said Cleve Stuart as he drew the arm of his wife within his own and prepared to cross the country road, or village street, as you may prefer to call it.

"If the inn is anything like that of Oaklands I shall not be very sorry. Come on, Poley. Keep close behind us," said Palma.

"Scuse me, marster; is you Marse Cleve Stuart?" inquired a voice from the darkness at his elbow.

"Yes. Who are you?" demanded Stuart.

"'Sias, sah, old Marse John Clebe's man f'om Wolfskif; yas, sah, dat's me," replied the invisible.

"And you have been sent to meet us, eh? Come in here. Let us take a look at one another," said Cleve with a laugh, as he led the way into the lighted station.

The negro was a man of middle age, tall, stout, strong and very black, and clothed in a warm suit of thick, heavy homespun cloth.

"You have been sent to meet us?" again suggested Stuart.

"Yas, sah! along wid de ox cart, to fetch you an'—de ladies, do' I did'n know as dere wasn't no more'n one lady; but, laws! de more de better, I say, marster, and my name's 'Sias, old Marse John Clebe's man f'm Wolfskif Hall—yas, sah."

"Did you say you had brought the ox cart for us?" inquired Stuart in some dismay as he thought of his dainty wife.

"Yas, sah! I has fetched the ox cart, wid Baron an' Markiss yoked on, an' dey is de best beasts on de plantation, kind and gentle as new milk, 'specially Baron, to fetch you an' de ladies and de luggage, all at de same time, an' dere's a-plenty o' hay for de ladies to sit on jes' as clean an' as dry n' s sweet as wiolits."

"But was there no carriage in my uncle's stables?" inquired Cleve.

"Plenty. But, Lor', marster, dey was one an' all so ole an' rusty, an' flip-floppy, an' ramshakelly, dat dey couldn't be trusted on good roads in good wedder by daylight, let alone bad roads in bad wedder by night. An' wot is true ob de kerridges mought be said ob de hosses, likewise. Dey wouldn' be sho-futted on sich roads in sich wedder at night. De ox cart is de mos' safes' an' de oxes is de mos' sho-futtedes'. An' yo' wouldn' like to hab de ladies' necks broke for de sake ob pomps an' wanities in kerridges! Would yo' now?"

Cleve laughed, but Palma put in her word:

"Oh, Cleve, I'm delighted! It is so new! such fun! to ride on the hay in an ox cart! It seems so of a piece with all our strange experiences! Yes! this is some new planet! Not our old familiar earth!"

"How did you happen to be here to meet us? We are a day and a half behind time," inquired Stuart.

"Ole Marse John Clebe, ob Wolfskif Hall—an' I am his own man 'Sias, wot nebber would 'mancipate him in de ole ages ob his onnerrubble life fur all de President an' Con'gess might say—telled me to come yere to meet yer an'

stay for de las' train till you 'rove, an' dis is de mos' secondes' day as I hab been yere to meet yo'! An' now, young marse, ef yo'll listen to me, yo'll put de ladies in de cart an' we'll jog off."

"All right, 'Sias. Show us the way to the chariot," laughed Cleve.

The negro set his lantern down in a chair, took from it a bit of candle, which he lighted by a match and replaced, and said:

"Now I shows the way, young marster," and walked out of the station, followed by Stuart, Palma and Poley.

He led them to the lower end of the platform near which the ox cart stood, with its floor thickly carpeted with layers of hay, and with its yoke of oxen standing and pawing in the cold night air. Their heads were turned away from the town, as if all ready for their jog across the country.

Stuart put Palma upon the cart, and she settled herself in the hay with childish delight.

Then he helped Mrs. Pole to a seat beside her.

"And now, Marse Clebe, ef yo' will jes' git up dar on dat bench, in front ob de two ladies, yo'll obleege dis compinny! 'Caze, yo' see, I's got to walk at the head ob de creeturs to keep 'em straight on to de road."

"Is that necessary?" inquired Stuart as he climbed to his place and settled himself comfortably.

"'N'essary?" exclaimed 'Sias. "Why, la, bress yer soul, Marse Clebe! dere's places 'long dis road w're ef dis yere nigh beast was to make a misstep, we'd all go ober down free fo' hunderd feet to the rocks below. No, sah! I's gwine walk at dis creetur's head and carry my lantern, too," concluded 'Sias as the oxen moved slowly and heavily onward as was their manner.

The lantern might have been, and probably was, a help to the vision of 'Sias and so to the safety of his party, but it could show only a small section of the road immediately under the feet of the conductor.

Nothing could be seen of the surrounding country except that it consisted of densely wooded mountains, whose skeleton trees were faintly outlined against the ground of snow.

When their eyes grew accustomed to the darkness the travelers in the cart could see, to their horror, that they were plodding along a rough and narrow road between a

high rise of rocks on their right and a deep fall on their left; but the cautious negro guide with his lantern walked by the heads of the oxen between them and the precipice, keeping them out of the terrible danger. For an hour their way lay along this road, and then began slowly to descend a gradual slope, and finally turned to the right and entered a thick wood.

'Sias heaved a deep sigh of relief and said:

"Peoples sez, w'en dey gits out'n dif'culty an' danger, as dey's 'out'n de woods.' But, la! I allers feels as if I wasn't safe until I was offen dat dar debbil's shelf, up dar, an' got down yere in dese woods."

"How far are we from the house, 'Sias?" inquired Stuart.

"On'y 'bout a mile, young marster. Get dere werry soon now. Dis yere is all ole Marse John Clebe's lan'."

"Oh! is it?"

"Yas, sah. An' dis woods usen to be called Wolfswalk in de ollen times, I's heern says, 'cause dar was mos' as many wolfs as trees, an' de station ober yonder was just named arter dese yer woods, an' dats de trufe for a fac'."

They jogged through the dark, mysterious-looking woods for some time in silence, Palma only once murmuring:

"It is like a dream, or a scene in a fairy tale. I feel as if we should come upon something soon—an ogre's castle, an enchanted beauty's palace, or something. Don't wake me up, please, anybody."

What they did come upon very soon was a glimmering light, that seemed to shoot here and there through the thick, leafless trees like a firefly, had it been summer instead of winter.

"It's a lamp in de big hall; it shines right froo de fan-light ober de front do', an' it seems to flit about so 'caze sometimes de trees sho' it an' sometimes dey doan't," 'Sias explained. And as he spoke the ox cart slowly and clumsily drew up before a large, oblong building of the simplest and plainest style of architecture common among the wealthier class of that region at the time the house was planned.

Though the travelers could not, at that time of night, discern its features, yet this seems the best time for their historian to describe it.

The house was built in the rude, strong, plain style of the best old colonial mansions, of rough-hewn gray rocks of

every variegated shade of red, blue, green, yellow, purple and orange, which gave a mosaic aspect to the walls. It was an oblong double house, with a broad double door, having two long windows on each side of the first floor, and five windows on the second floor, surmounted by a steep roof, with five dormer windows, and buttressed by four huge chimneys, two at each gable end. There were many old oak, elm and chestnut trees around the dwelling, and there were smaller houses, of rude construction, in the rear.

When the ox cart stopped before the door Stuart got off his seat and lifted down his wife and her attendant. He tucked Palma's hand under his arm and led her up the few steps that went up to the front door. That door was open and full of light from a large lamp that hung from the ceiling of the spacious hall, and within the door stood the master of the house to welcome his coming relatives.

He was a man of middle height—the thinnest, whitest, most shadowy living man they had ever seen.

"You are welcome to Wolfscliff, my dears," he said, giving a hand each to Palma and to Cleve.

"We are very glad to see you, uncle," said the two in one breath.

"And this lady?" said the old-fashioned gentleman, with native courtesy as he held out his hand to Mrs. Pole, of whom he had just caught sight.

"Our friend, Mrs. Pole, who never leaves Palma, uncle," explained Cleve.

"Ah! I am glad to see you, ma'am," said Mr. Cleve.

"Thank you, sir. I am only Mrs. Cleve Stuart's housekeeper and attendant," said Mrs. Pole, who would not consent to seem a half an inch above her real social position.

"Ah! And a very trusted and esteemed friend, also, I have no doubt," replied the old gentleman.

"She is, indeed, sir, like a mother to my delicate Palma," assented Stuart.

"I am very glad she consented to accompany you here," said Mr. Cleve.

In the moment they stood there talking Palma took in with her eyes the whole of the spacious hall. It ran from front to back through the middle of the house, with double doors at each end, four doors on either side and a broad staircase going up from the midst. A hat rack and half a

dozen heavy oak chairs were the only furniture. There was no carpet on the polished oak floor, no pictures on the paneled wall.

"Will you come into the parlor, or would you prefer, first, to go to your rooms?" inquired the old gentleman, opening a door on his right.

"Which would you rather do, Palma?" inquired Cleve.

"Oh, go into the parlor! You see, uncle, we have not come through dust, but through snow, and we are as clean as when we had washed this morning," replied Palma.

The old man led the way into a large, square room, with paneled walls, polished floor, heavy walnut chairs and tables, and a broad, open fireplace, with brass andirons, on which was piled about an eighth of a cord of blazing hickory logs. Around this was a brass fender; above it, on the wall, a handsome carved oak mantelpiece surmounted by a broad mirror, and down before it on the floor a rich old Turkey rug. Two large armchairs stood in each chimney corner.

"Now, my dears, and you, ma'am, make yourselves comfortable and be quite at home. Supper will be ready in a few minutes," said Mr. Cleve as he sank into one of the armchairs.

Then Palma saw how fragile he really was—his transparent face was as white as ashes, his thin hair and thin whiskers were like floss of silver, his hands were the longest, thinnest, fairest hands ever seen. He was clothed in a dark blue dressing-gown which he folded double over his knees, and the bald spot on the top of his head was covered with a much worn old blue velvet skullcap. His aspect suggested frost, cobweb, chrysalis. Only his deep-set, soft brown eyes shone warm and bright with the fire of life, light and love from the true soul, so slightly held by the fragile frame and almost ready to fly.

CHAPTER XXX

THE MOUNTAIN HOME.

MR. CLEVE stretched out his hand and pulled the bell.

An elderly colored woman came in.

"Serve the supper in here, Polly. The dining-room is too cold, I think," he said.

"Yes, marster," the woman replied and went out.

"It is in the northwest angle of the house, and has four large windows—two north and two west—which shake and rattle, and let in the wind when it blows, as it does now, from that quarter; and also sends the smoke in volumes down the chimney. So I think it will be more comfortable for us to eat supper here," Mr. Cleve explained as he bent forward and spread his thin, fair hands to the fire.

"I am sure there could not be a pleasanter room than this," said Palma from her low rocker as she basked in the warm glow.

"Ah-h-h!" added Stuart with a sigh of deep satisfaction as he rubbed his hands.

The woman soon came back with faded felt crumb cloth in her arms, which she went on to lay down on the shining oak floor.

She was followed by a colored girl with the table damask in her hands. Between them they set the table, adorning it with rare old china and antique silver. And then a good supper, in honor of the new arrivals, as well as in consideration of the weary and hungry travelers. There was tea, coffee and chocolate, milk, cream and butter, rolls, waffles and cakes, ham, poultry and game, eggs, cheese and fruit—variety, without superabundance.

Mr. Cleve arose and invited his relatives to take their seats, and himself led Palma to the head of the table, saying pleasantly:

"This is your place henceforth, my child—a place that has not been filled since my dear niece, your husband's mother, married and left me."

Palma raised and kissed the pale hand that led her, and then sat down befort the tea tray.

The old gentleman sat opposite to her at the foot, Stuart on the right and Mrs. Pole on the left side.

The venerable master of the house asked the blessing, and the feast began. The two colored women waited on the table—the elder one stood beside Palma to hand the cups; the younger beside Mr. Cleve, to pass the plates. Varied and appetizing as was the supper, the host partook but daintily, contenting himself with a cup of cocoa and a wafer. But Cleve and Palma had healthy young appetites,

and so delighted the hearts of the waiting women with their appreciation of the good things set before them.

When the meal was over and the table cleared of the service the elder woman set a lamp upon it; then brought the family Bible and laid it open where the place was kept by her master's spectacles as a book mark.

"Come, my dear children, let us draw near to Our Father," said the patriarch. And once more they gathered around the table, on this occasion for worship.

John Cleve read the first chapter of the Sermon on the Mount; then made a pause, that all might reflect on the divine lesson; next led in the evening thanksgiving and prayer, offering up on this occasion especially grateful acknowledgments for the dear children sent to be a comfort to his declining days, and prayers for their spiritual and eternal welfare. Then he pronounced the benediction, and the evening service was over.

As soon as they arose from their knees the elder colored woman, whom her master had called Polly, came up to Palma and said:

"Please, ma'am, if you would like to go to your room now I am ready to wait on you."

"Thank you. I should like to retire," replied wearied Palma.

"An' de oder lady, likewise," added the woman, nodding toward Mrs. Pole.

"Yes, I'm sure she would. She is even more fatigued than I am—than either of us," replied Palma.

"W'ich it is her age-able years, ma'am, of coorse. She can't be as young as she used to be," said the woman gravely.

"Probably not," admitted Palma with a smile.

The waiting woman lighted two short sperm candles, in short brackets, and, with one in each hand, prepared to lead the way.

"Shall we bid you good-night, uncle, dear?" inquired Palma, going to the side of his easy-chair and bending over him.

"You may, my dear, and your friend; but I must have ten minutes' talk with your husband here before I let him go. I will not keep him longer than that," replied the old gentleman benignly.

"Good-night, then, uncle, dear," she said, raising his delicate hands to her lips.

"God bless you, my love," he responded, drawing her to him and leaving a kiss on her forehead.

"Good-night, sir," said Mrs. Pole with a formal bow.

"Good-night, ma'am," replied Mr. Cleve, lifting his skullcap and bending his head.

Palma and Poley followed the colored woman out of the parlor into the big, bare hall, up the broad stairs to the upper hall, which was quite as big and as bare.

It was bitterly cold. With a heavily wooded country, with forests of pine, oak, cedar, hickory, chestnut, poplar and other timber, on the slopes and in the valleys, and with mines of coal among the rocks and caverns, it seemed yet impossible to keep a country house of that region warm in winter. You might keep certain rooms within it warm, but not the halls and passages, not the whole house, for the reason that they had no system of furnaces, registers, heat pipes and so forth; but then they were considered all the more wholesome on that account.

Nevertheless, Palma shivered and shook as with an ague when she stepped upon the upper landing of the second floor hall. It was almost exactly like the hall below; four bedroom doors flanked it on each side, and there was a large window at each end, corresponding to the front and back door of the under one.

Polly led them about halfway up the hall toward the front of the house, and paused before a door on the right hand, about midway, saying:

"Here is yer room, ma'am, and the most comfortablest one in the whole house, 'ceps 'tis ole marster's, which is downstairs, on t'other side ob de hall, behine de parlor, an' befo' de kitchen, and 'tween 'em bofe, is sort o' fended an' warmed, and purtected by bofe sides habbin' ob a big fire into it, bofe day an' night."

She opened a door and showed them into a spacious chamber, warmed and lighted by a great fire of hickory logs in the ample chimney, which was directly opposite the door by which they had entered. Tall brass andirons supported the blazing logs, an antique brass fender and crossed fire-irons secured the rich Turkey rug and the polished oak floor from danger by falling brands or flying sparks; a carved

oak mantelshelf surmounted the fireplace and supported an oblong mirror, with a tall silver candlestick at each end. There was a high window on each side of the fireplace, but both were closed now, sash and shutter, and the snowy dimity curtains were dropped. At the end of the room nearest the front of the house stood a large, four-post bedstead, with high-tented tester, from which hung full, white dimity curtains festooned and looped from ceiling to floor. Beside this white "marquee" lay a small Turkey rug.

A chest of drawers, a walnut press, a corner washstand and two easy-chairs draped with white dimity completed the furniture.

"That little door, ma'am," said Polly, pointing to one in the wall opposite the foot of the bed, though a good distance from it, "leads into a d'essin'-yoom, where you can also keep yer extry clothes and fings as yer wouldn't like to clutter up yer bedroom wid."

"Thank you," said Palma, dropping into one of the easy-chairs and beginning to unbutton her own boots.

"Wait, ma'am. Let me. Please let me. I'll just show this lady here to her yoom, and then come and take off your shoes for you!" exclaimed Polly.

Then she put one of her candles on the chest of drawers, and retaining the other, turned to Mrs. Pole and said:

"Now, ma'am, please I'll take yer to your yoom. It's just across the hall yere, right opposite to dis."

"Thanky," replied Mrs. Pole. "I'll go and find out where it is, and much obleeged to you. But then, dear, I will come back and stay long o' you until Mr. Stuart comes up."

"Quite right, Poley, dear," replied Palma, who by this time had got her boots off and her slippers out of her hand-bag and onto her feet, and was sitting before the fire with her toes on the top of the fender.

Polly took Mrs. Pole across the hall to the opposite room, which as to size, windows and fireplace, was exactly like that of Palma's, except that it had a northern instead of a southern aspect, and was, therefore, somewhat colder. It was also upholstered in curtain calico instead of white dimity, and had a picture of the Washington family, instead of a handsome mirror over the mantelpiece. But there was a

fine fire burning which filled the room with light and warmth.

"Now, ma'am, if yer want anything as I can get you——" began Polly; but Mrs. Pole interrupted and dismissed her.

"No; thank you. Good-night," she said.

And Polly left the room.

Pretty soon Mrs. Pole recrossed the hall and re-entered Palma's apartment.

"Has the colored woman gone at last?" she inquired.

"Yes, Poley. But what is the matter, dear? I do believe you are jealous of that poor creature," said Palma.

"No, I am not; but I don't like to be waited on and fussed over so much. I don't myself! It is all wrong and on false grounds. They treat me here just as if I was a lady and——" began Mrs. Pole, but she in her turn was interrupted by Palma, who said:

"Poley, dear, they treat you as a respectable woman, and as they treat all respectable women—that is, all respectable white women. You are to be our housekeeper and, as such, one of the family. Don't 'kick against the pricks,' Poley, dear."

"I kick against anything? If you knew the stiffness of my joints through sitting so long in the cars you wouldn't be talking of me and kicking in the same breath," said Mrs. Pole with an injured air.

Ringling steps, attended by shuffling feet, were heard coming along the hall, and then the voice of Cleve Stuart saying:

"That will do, 'Sias! Thank you. Good-night."

And the shuffling feet went back and the ringing steps came on, and the door opened and Cleve Stuart entered the room.

"Well, good-night, dearie, I'm gone. Good-night, Mr. Stuart," said Mrs. Pole. And rising from the second easy-chair into which she had thrown herself she nodded and left them, regardless of Stuart's good-natured protestations that she must not let him drive her away.

All our tired travelers "slept the sleep of the just" that night.

As for Palma, she knew nothing from the time her head

touched her pillow until she opened her eyes the next morning.

The room was dark, or lighted only by the red glow of the hickory wood fire, and it was silent but for an occasional crackle of some brand that was not of hickory, but of some more resinous wood that had found its way in among the harder sort.

Stuart was not by her side, nor anywhere in the room. Evidently he had got up and dressed and left while she still slept soundly.

Palma crept out of bed and crossed the floor to open the window, but as she did so the chamber door was opened and the younger of the two negro women came in.

"'Mornin', ma'am," she said brightly, smiling and showing her teeth. "I was jes' waitin' outside o' de do' fo' yo' to wake up, to come in an' wait on yo'."

"You must have good ears," said Palma.

"Middlin'. But w'en I heerd de planks in de flo' creak, den I knowed yo' was walkin' across. I did brung up a pitcher o' hot water fo' yo' an' put it on de ha'rf—dar it is, ma'am," said the girl, and she stooped and took up the pitcher and carried it over to the washstand.

"Tell me your name," said Palma softly.

"Hatty, ma'am," replied the girl, smiling brightly. And when she smiled it was with a brilliancy unequalled in Palma's experience of faces. Hatty's face was of the pure African type. There was not a drop of Caucasian blood in her veins; but she was of the finest African type, with fine crinkling, silky, black hair, with glowing black eyes, so large, soft and shining that, with varying phases they might be called black diamonds, black stars, or—when half closed with smiles or laughter, and veiled with their long, thick, curled, black lashes—sunlit, reed-shaded pools. Her nose was flat; her lips large and red, and her teeth white as ivory. And when she laughed she seemed to be a natural spring of mirth all by herself. And she was almost always laughing, often silently. Few could look on the happy face of the child without smiling in response.

"Well, then, Hatty, I am afraid I am late. I hope I have not kept anybody waiting."

The girl, who had gone to open the windows, turned and answered shortly:

"Oh, Lor', no, ma'am! De birds deirselves—w'ich it is de snowbirds, I mean—ain't been long up, an' de sun hese'f hasn' showed 'bove de mount'in, dough he's riz. See, ma'am!"

She had drawn back the curtains and pulled up the shade, and now she threw open the shutters.

Palma came to the window and looked out.

Oh! what a glorious sight! Yet, to be graphic, I must compare great things to small, or at least illustrate the former by the latter. The house from which she looked seemed now to be situated in the bottom of a vast, deep, bowl-shaped valley, its colors now, in midwinter, dark green, with gleams of snow-white, the whole canopied by deep blue, flushed in the east by opal shades of rose, gold, violet, and emerald. The mountains loomed all around in a circle of irregular peaks, all thickly covered with pines, cedars, spruce and other evergreen trees, which grew closest at the base and thinnest near the tops, which were mostly bare, and now, in December, covered with snow.

Looking from the front window of her room Palma could see but half the circle—the eastern half, made beautiful now by the rising sun. The sun had not yet come in sight; but even as Palma gazed he suddenly sparkled up from behind the cliffs, gilding all the opal hues of morning with dazzling splendor.

"Oh, what a happiness to live in a home like this!" she said to herself; "how good one ought to be to become half worthy of it! Oh, my! oh, my!"

She heard voices speaking below her window. In the clearness of the atmosphere she recognized them as her husband's and his uncle's.

The former was saying:

"Why, they are not a bit afraid of you! They seem to know you."

"Oh, yes! they do."

And the speakers became silent.

"It's ole marse, a-feedin' ob de snowbirds," Hatty explained. "Ole marse is jes' a angel, ma'am! He's good to eberybody an' eberyfing."

"You love your master very much, then, Hatty?" said Palma.

"Lub him? Dat ain't no word for it! 'Cause, yo' see,

ma'am, I lubs so many bodies an' so many fings, too, even down to red ribbins an' cakes! But I puffickly 'dores ole marse!" said the girl, smiling until her eyes closed and all the lines of her features were horizontal.

Palma had gone to the washstand, where now the sound of splashing water prevented the hearing of any talk. Then, while she was drying her face and neck, she said:

"Run, Hatty, and take my traveling dress from the hook in the closet, and carry it out and shake it, and brush it, and bring it back to me. I won't take time now to unpack my trunks to get another."

Almost before she ceased to speak the girl, glad to serve her, had darted into the closet, seized the dress, and was running off with it.

By the time Palma had dried her skin and dressed her hair Hatty was back with the dark blue flannel suit, looking as fresh as when it came out of Lovelace & Silkman's establishment.

As soon as Palma finished her toilet she hurried downstairs and was met at the foot by the aged master of the house, who had just come in from his bird feeding.

He wore a faded, dark blue dressing-gown, thickly wadded, and wrapped closely about his fragile form. He looked, if possible, fairer, frailer and more of a mere chrysalis than ever.

"Good-morning, my dear," he said. "You have slept well, I know, and have risen to a beautiful day."

"Yes, dear uncle, and opened my eyes upon a beautiful scene! Ah! what a happiness it is to live in such a lovely place! How much I thank you for bringing us to such a heavenly place!" said Palma, taking and kissing the pale hand that he had laid in silent blessing on her head.

"How much I thank you for coming, dear child!"

"Thank us for coming into paradise?"

"Not paradise even in summer, when it is almost a Garden of Eden in the dip of the mountains! But I hope it will be a very happy home to you and yours. Remember that you are mistress here, of a house that has not had a mistress for more than thirty years, when my dear niece, your husband's mother, married and left it."

"No, but I am your servant, uncle—your servant and

daughter, whose duty and delight will be to wait on you and minister to your comfort," murmured Palma.

"Breakfast is ready, ma'am," said Polly, the elderly negro woman, opening the parlor door.

"Come, my dear," said Mr. Cleve, drawing Palma's arm within his own and leading her to the room, where the table was waiting and a splendid fire was burning.

"Where is Mr. Stuart and Mrs. Pole?" inquired Palma, looking around.

"Go find them, Hatty," ordered the master. But as he spoke Cleve entered the room by the side door and laughingly greeted his wife with the ironical question whether she was really "up for all day?"

"You should have waked me," said Palma.

"No, no, he should not. I hold with the Koran and 'never awaken a sleeper' unless, indeed, the occasion is sufficiently important, which it was not this morning," said Mr. Cleve as they all sat down to breakfast.

Mrs. Pole came in, convoyed by Hatty, who had found her upstairs setting Palma's room in order, and had taken upon herself to instruct the good old woman that "age-able ole white ladies didn't make up no beds when there was colored young girls to do it for 'em."

When Mrs. Pole had greeted the company and taken her seat the master of the house asked the blessing and breakfast went on.

After the morning meal was ended and the table cleared away Mr. Cleve said to Palma:

"Now, my dear, when you feel disposed call Polly to show you all over the house. And you will make any alterations you see fit, choose any rooms that you may prefer for your private apartments, and make a list of any furniture or household utensils that you may need or may like, and they shall be bought. There is a good sleigh in the carriage house. If you would like to take a drive, send Hatty to the stables to tell Josias to clean it out and harness the horses. Do whatever you like, my child."

"Thank you, dear uncle. I wish I knew what you would like, and that I would do."

"I would like you to be happy, my child."

"Very well, then; thank you, uncle, I will," exclaimed Palma with a light laugh as she danced out of the room

and tripped upstairs to her own chamber to begin the work of unpacking and putting away her own and her husband's wardrobe, in which she was to be assisted by Mrs. Pole, who soon entered the room.

Never in her life had Palma been so happy, so light-hearted, so contented with the present, so careless of the future. Even in her bridal days, sickness and the shadow of death had been about her and had sobered, if it had not darkened her delight. But now every cloud was lifted; the present was full of joy, the future full of glad promise, and her own soul overflowing with thankfulness to the Lord.

Mrs. Pole was almost equally enchanted.

"Now, Poley, we have both reached a haven of peace and safety that is like a heavenly rest. Let us be good and obedient children to our Father and Lord. That is all we can do to show our gratitude," said Palma, who was kneeling by the side of her great sea trunk, taking out clothing piece by piece and handing them to her attendant, who was standing before the bureau and who folded each article in turn and put it away.

"Darling," answered Mrs. Pole, "I do not think as ever I did such a good and altogether profitable day's work as I did that precious day when I found you too ill to get out of bed and not a single soul to take care of you; and when I said to myself as the week's washing at Wilton's would have to go with my week's wages into the bargain, and to-morrow would have to take thought for itself, according to Scripture, for once, for I was bound to stop long o' you an' nuss you. Lor', child! I haven't too often walked by faith instead o' by sight, but I did it that once, and lo and behold! what's come outen it! We have never parted from that day to this, and here I am in my old age not only comfortable, but luxurious pervided for."

"You 'cast your bread upon the waters and after many days it has returned to you,'" said Palma.

"And, please the Lord, for the futur' I do mean to try to be a better woman," said Mrs. Pole very earnestly.

When their task was completed and everything was in order, Palma dropped into an easy-chair, drew a deep breath, and said:

"Now, Poley, it is but eleven o'clock, and there are three hours before Uncle Cleve's early dinner at two, so, if you

like, we will send for Aunt Polly—all the colored women who are past their youth are aunts, you know; everybody's aunts, Cleve says—we will send for Aunt Polly and get her to show us all over our new little kingdom, this big, old house—its dining-room, kitchen and pantry, its storerooms, china and linen closets, its chambers, attics and cuddies, and all. Will you come, Poley, dear?"

"And you tired to death and out of breath now? No, my dear. No. You must not exert yourself one bit more to-day. Now mind what I tell you, honey. It is for your good and Its!" replied Mrs. Pole, with a solemn warning shake of her head.

"Very well, Poley, I will obey you. Cleve and uncle are shut up in the parlor, talking business, I suppose, so I will sit here and sew until dinner time, or until I am called," said Palma.

Mrs. Pole got up and went to the shelf in the closet and returned with Palma's workbasket, in which her sewing was already neatly arranged, and set it down on the floor beside its owner.

And Palma selected a tiny, half-finished garment that might have fitted a medium doll, and began to sew some lace edging on it. And soon, in the gayety of her heart, she began to sing at her work.

Mrs. Pole got her own basket of infirm socks and stockings and began to darn.

CHAPTER XXXI

UNCLE AND NEPHEW

WHILE they were so occupied Mr. Cleve had closed the parlor door, shutting himself in with his nephew for a long talk over their past and present lives and future arrangements—though the earthly future of the aged man would necessarily be very brief.

The old gentleman wished rather to hear than to talk, and so he only briefly reverted to the main events of his own life—his early disappointment in love when his betrothed bride was taken ill and died a few days before their

intended marriage, and was buried in her bridal dress on her wedding day.

"Yet, no; she was not buried, only her left-off body was buried. She lived! Oh! how vividly! how blessedly! how potently she lives! And I shall soon see her again! After seventy years, my boy! after seventy years! But what are they, in view of the life everlasting?" said the aged man in conclusion of this reminiscence.

Cleve Stuart made no reply, but pressed his uncle's hand in reverential silence.

Then the old man spoke of the nephews who had borne his own name and expected to inherit his estate, but who had both died, unmarried, of wounds received in battle. Then he spoke of his long, vain search of his niece's son, Cleve Stuart, and of the chance by which he found him.

"And now, my boy, that I have found you, let me say that I find you all that I could wish, and your young wife—charming! But tell me about her, Cleve. Who is she?" he inquired.

"Palma is the daughter of the late James Jordan Hay and the granddaughter of the late John Hayward Hay, of Haymore, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, England," replied Stuart.

"Why—indeed! I knew the old squire. When I went to Europe in my young manhood I reached England in the autumn, and through a letter of introduction got an invitation to Mr. Storr's, of Hoxton, where I stayed for the Melton hunts and met Mr. Hay, of Haymore. Yes, the Hays, of Haymore, are an ancient, historical, almost, I might say, an illustrious family. I congratulate you, my boy, but more on the personal merit of your young wife than on her family connections. Who represents the house now at Haymore? Which of the three lads I found there?"

Stuart, as briefly as possible, gave him the later family history.

"What a fatality! All these fine boys to pass away in early manhood! And the son of Cuthbert, the second brother, you say, inherits the manor. I remember Cuthbert well. He was intended for the church. They called him Cuddie. Now, tell me how you came to meet Palma. She was the daughter of the youngest brother, James, you say."

"Yes; and after the death of her parents she was adopted

by Judge and Mrs. Barn, who were my guardians. I met Palma in their house when I first went there to live, and so knew her from her infancy up. I won her pure affection then, and never afterward lost it, thank Heaven."

"An excellent knowledge and a blessed beginning. Now, tell me how it was you lost your Mississippi plantation."

"I have not lost it. It is legally mine, but of no more use to me than would be so many acres of waste land in Sahara. The land is, indeed, a desert, and the buildings a mass of charred ruins."

"Through the war?"

"Yes, of course. Mansion house, stables, barns, mills, negroes' quarters fired and burned to the ground; stock all driven off; negroes conscripted. The place is a ruin and a wilderness; it would take many thousand dollars to reclaim it.

The old man sighed, but made no reply.

Then Stuart told him frankly of the desperate straits to which he had been reduced at the time when his uncle's letter came to him so opportunely.

Mr. Cleve was shocked.

"If I had known! If I had only known!" he said.

But in all his narrative Stuart never mentioned the name or existence of either Lamia Leegh or Gentleman Geff. It was bad enough, he thought, to trouble the old gentleman's calm spirit with the tale of want; but it would have been far worse to have darkened and depressed it with the story of falsehood and treachery.

The early dinner bell brought the family together, and around the table were only happy faces. All the painful past was for the time forgotten.

The afternoon was beautiful.

The large old sleigh was brushed out, lined with buffalo skins and blankets, and brought around to the front door by two swift horses. And the four—Mr. Cleve, Mrs. Pole, Stuart and Palma—took a ride; the first pair seated on the back seat, the second on the front seat, and Josias, the coachman, on the box.

They took the road that skirted the base of the mountains, on the inside, and went in a circle around the plantation. On this road, under the shelter of the mountains,

stood the negroes' quarters—log huts, large and small, from one room to two, three or even four, according to the necessities of the occupants. The men and boys were all away at such farm work as the season permitted, and the women were engaged in washing, ironing, cooking, or carding and spinning wool. Their open doors showed their occupations, and showed also the bright pine wood fires that so warmed their huts as to permit these open doors.

The sleigh passed too swiftly for the party in it to return half the nods and smiles with which their passage was greeted.

"Uncle," said Palma, "you appear to me like a patriarch of old living among his tribe."

"Yes, dear child, with this exception—the patriarchs were men of large families, with many sons and daughters, and sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, and innumerable grandchildren and great-grandchildren to the third and fourth generation, to rise up and call them blessed. And I—have none."

"Oh! uncle, dear, you have us. We love you; indeed, we do. And we will serve you as tenderly and devotedly as any children could."

"I know it, my dear; I know it. And I thank the Lord for sending you to me."

"And I thank the Lord that you let us come. And, oh! uncle, I wish we could multiply ourselves into a tribe of many generations to serve and bless you."

"All in good time, my little love; all in good time," said the old man with a twinkle in his glowing brown eyes.

The three miles' circuit of the road was completed, and they reached the house just as the winter sun was winking out of sight behind the western peak.

"The first day the ground will admit of walking I shall go on foot to make the acquaintance of all your interesting people, Uncle Cleve. I liked the glimpses I got of them as we flew by," said Palma as she gave her hand to her husband and sprang out of the sleigh.

"Yes, my child, so you shall," replied the old man as he in his turn alighted with the assistance of both Stuart and Palma. "So you shall, my dear. And there are some few neighbors and some distant relatives of ours with whom you must soon make acquaintance."

"Who are they, uncle, dear?" inquired Palma as she entered the house on the old man's arm, followed by Stuart and Mrs. Pole, while 'Sias drove the sleigh around to the stables.

"I will tell you presently, dear," replied Mr. Cleve.

In the hall Palma laid off her fur cloak and hood and gave them to Hatty to take upstairs. Stuart helped his uncle off with his overcoat and muffler.

When they had all returned to the oak parlor, where the great fire had been replenished, and were seated around the hearth enjoying the glow, and while Polly was passing in and out setting the tea table, Mr. Cleve said:

"We have no very near relations left in this world. We who sit here are the nearest of kin to each other. Still, you know, Virginians are as clannish as highlanders."

"Yes, indeed. I remember that much of my beloved mother. No matter how distant the relationship or how humble or even unworthy the individual, my dear mother always held sacred the claims of kindred. My poor father, who was not so clannish, used to laugh at her a little and ask:

"Why do you not take in all the human race at once, since all are sons and daughters of our first parents, and brothers and sisters of ourselves?"

"Well, he was right," commented the old man.

"But excuse me for interrupting you, uncle. You were speaking of our kindred in this country, and we are anxious to hear of them."

"Well, my boy, there are the Gordons, of Gordondell; they are our third cousins, and live about seven miles south of this on the Staunton road. They are a large family of three generations, living in one house; but they are all Gordons. Then there are the Bells, of the Elms; only two, a bachelor brother and maiden sister, living on their little place just beyond Wolfswalk. And the Clydes, my dears, who live in the village, and keep a general store. There is a young father and mother and half a dozen children. That is all. They are all more or less injured by the war, and are poor, and—some of them—somewhat embittered by their losses; but they are our kindred, and we must have them all here to meet you in the coming Christmas holidays."

"Tea is on the table, ma'am," said Polly.

And the party left the fireside and gathered around the table.

The sleigh ride had given them all fine appetites, and they enjoyed their repast.

After it was over, and the evening worship was offered up, the little family separated and retired to rest.

And so ended the first day at Wolfsciff; the first, also, of many happy days.

The cousins did not wait to be invited. The news of the new arrival at the Hall was soon spread through the neighborhood by the negroes, and neighbors and relatives lost no time in calling on the young pair.

And yet these were not so truly calls as visits, for when any one came to the house they arrived in the morning to stay all day and take dinner and tea. They expected this, and it was also expected of them.

The very first to come were the Gordons, who arrived early in the morning a few days before Christmas. They came in a big ox cart, and filled it. There was old Mr. and Mrs. Gordon, an ancient couple nearly ninety years of age, bowed, shriveled and white-haired, yet, withal, right merry; and their bachelor brother and maiden sister, Mr. Tommy and Miss Nancy Gordon, as aged and as merry as themselves; then there was the son and daughter, Col. and Mrs. George Gordon, both stout, rosy and full of the enjoyment of this life, and their middle-aged bachelor brother and maiden sister, Mr. Henry and Miss Rebecca Gordon. And there were seven young men and three young women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-seven. But, really, it would take up too much time and space to tell you all their names and ages and characters. They were a happy, rollicking set of young people.

They had not been much hurt either in mind, body or estate by the war, and were neither depressed nor embittered.

Then came the two old folks from the Elms. And, finally, the Clydes, from the village.

And besides these, neighbors came; old families who had been in the land, as the Cleves had, from the first settlement by the English—the Hills, the Ords, and the Balls—all of whom lived within ten miles of Wolfsciff.

And all of these kinsfolks and neighbors were warmly welcomed at Wolfsliff, and well liked by Cleve and Palma.

Christmas brought its usual festivities at the home, but also a snowstorm that commenced on the morning of Christmas Eve and continued all day and all night and all the next day, covering the ground two feet deep, and toward the close of the second day, when the wind rose, drifting in places several yards deep.

This made it impossible for the families at Wolfsliff to leave the house; but Mr. Cleve held service in the large drawing-room, where all his people from the plantation, as well as the members of his household, were collected.

And when the service was over Christmas gifts were distributed, mostly in articles of clothing, to the servants. To Palma he gave a casket of pearls and rubies that had been his mother's; to Stuart he gave a fine horse, with new saddle and bridle, that he had within a few days past purchased from a neighbor.

Cleve and Palma gave to him an olive-green velveteen dressing-gown and skullcap to match, which they had purchased for this very purpose; and to the servants each they gave a piece of gold coin, having nothing else to offer them. And then the congregation dispersed joyfully.

The snowstorm continued, with a high wind. The contemplated dinner party for the twenty-seventh had to be given up. The state of the road made travel impossible for several days.

One of the first expeditions abroad was made by Josias, who, mounted on a stout mule, tried to reach the post office at Wolfswalk. It took him all day to go and come, but he succeeded, and late in the evening brought back letters and parcels that had been forwarded from New York to the Stuarts—letters and parcels that bore the London and the Haymore postmarks. The first were from the London solicitors of the Hays, of Haymore, and contained the information that certain railway, mining and manufacturing shares had been transferred from the name of Randolph Hay to that of Palma Hay Stuart, and were at her disposal, and included the bonds—for, after all, self-indulgent Will Walling had decided not to take the long journey to the mountains of Virginia in the midst of winter, but to for-

ward the documents by mail, and without even an explanatory letter from himself.

"I think you will have no trouble in finding the funds for the reclamation of your Mississippi estate," said John Cleve with a smile as he received the information which Stuart seemed proud and glad to give him. "Your wife's cousin is a noble, generous fellow. Whom did he marry?"

Cleve Stuart was for a moment dumfounded by the question. He had not so far risen above conventionality as not to feel much embarrassment in replying.

"Miss Judith Man, of California," answered Palma, on seeing that Stuart had found nothing to say.

"Ah! Who was she?" next inquired Mr. Cleve.

"The best, the noblest, the loveliest girl I ever met with in my life!" warmly responded Palma.

"Ah! that is well, very well! Of what family was she?" persevered the old gentleman, who was completely unconscious of the embarrassment his questions were causing.

"I really do not know, uncle, dear," answered Palma.

"I do not think we ever inquired," replied Stuart, speaking at last.

"Ah! well, it does not matter, so that she is a good, true girl, worthy of the noble young fellow," said Mr. Cleve.

"She is all that, uncle," said Stuart.

Palma and Stuart then opened their letters. They were from Ran and Judy, telling them of their arrival at Haymore, their reception of Gentleman Geff and his "lady," and, indeed, of all the events that transpired in the first few days of their stay at the Hall, and of which our readers are already informed; making no mention of the transfer of stocks from Ran to Palma; but renewing and pressing their invitation that the Stuarts would visit them in England during the next summer. Of course, Ran and Judy at the time of writing their letter had not heard of Cleve and Palma's removal to West Virginia.

Palma was so little a worshiper of Mammon that she was much more delighted with the faithful affection revealed in these letters than with the accession of fortune that accompanied them.

She flew upstairs to answer them. She was earnest in her thanks for Ran's magnanimity in giving her so noble a share in their grandfather's fortune; but she was even more

earnest in her appreciation of Judy's friendship and their mutual invitation to herself and Cleve. She had, however, to explain why neither of them could take advantage of the offered opportunity of visiting their friends in England, by telling them of her own and her husband's change of residence and new-found happiness in the country home of their aged uncle, and of the impossibility that they should leave him while his presence on earth should be spared to them.

Cleve Stuart also answered Ran's letters in very much the same strain, giving the same thanks with much deprecation, and offering the same explanations.

These letters were all taken to the post office the next morning.

In another week the weather moderated and the snow melted. But traveling was, if possible, more difficult than before, for the roads were sloughs of mud.

But within doors, at Wolfscliff, all was pleasant, comfortable and happy.

Only Mrs. Pole complained of having too little to do. But her special grievance did not last very long, for——

On the morning of the fourteenth of February Palma Stuart received from Above, in trust for earth and heaven, a most precious valentine, in the form of a pair of twins, a fine boy and girl. And no more grateful and delighted mother dwelling on the "footstool" that day raised her heart in prayer and thanksgiving to the Throne.

No prouder father lived than Stuart, no happier uncle than John Cleve, nor more important nurse than Mary Pole. She had enough to do now, both day and night, to nurse mother and babes.

On the very first visit Stuart was allowed to make at the bedside of his wife, when he had kissed her with deep feeling, and had admired the twins to his heart's content, she said to him:

"Cleve, dear, of course our boy must be named John Cleve, after dear uncle and yourself. But our little girl? Will you please ask uncle if he will let us call her Clarice, after his own dear angel love?"

"Well thought of, darling. I know he will be pleased. I will ask him as soon as I go downstairs," warmly responded Cleve Stuart.

"And you must go now, sir, if you please. She must be quiet and go to sleep if she can," said Mrs. Pole from the eminence of her new authority.

Stuart meekly bowed his head and obeyed.

The result of Palma's proposal was this: Early in the afternoon, when she had had a good sleep, had awakened and taken refreshment, and was resting in peace and bliss, the old gentleman came quietly into the room, sat down beside her, and said softly:

"I thank you, my dear. May the Lord bless you, and may He bless your dear babes—little Clarice and John."

CHAPTER XXXII

AN EARTHLY PARADISE

SPRING opens early on the southwestern section of Virginia, and leaves, flowers and birds come soon.

Palma and her babies were out with the violets and the bluebirds. And no one could have more enjoyed the beautiful weather in this glorious scene than the city-bred girl.

Even in April, the cup-shaped vale, shut in by green-wooded mountains, seemed a Garden of Eden, or the fairy "Valley of Calm Delights."

Stuart had taken to agricultural life as to his native element, and often declared his delight in it, and expressed his wonder how he, the descendant of a hundred generations of farmers, could have been contented to live in a city.

Directly after breakfast every morning he mounted his horse and rode out afield to look after the laborers. Certainly, much of the theory and practice of farming he had to learn from his uncle; but he was an apt pupil. So apt, he said to Palma, that his learning seemed to him more like the recollection of forgotten knowledge than the acquisition of new ideas.

Palma, for her part, loved to put her two babies in the double perambulator that had been brought from the nearest town for their use, and, attended by Hatty, wheel them out to the road that ran around the vale and was dotted with the log huts and little gardens of the negroes on the side

next to the mountain. This was like a royal progress. Everywhere the young mother and children were greeted with joy by the colored women and girls in the cabins.

On week days none but women and children could be found there; all the men were afield.

On Sunday they would all, or nearly all, go to church; and it was a strange thing that a little community, numbering less than one hundred, men, women and children all counted, should include so many religious sects; for here were to be found Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists. I think that was all; for of finer sub-divisions of doctrine or opinion they knew nothing, and a more Christian community than the people of this plantation, notwithstanding their sectarian differences, could scarcely be found anywhere. And this was owing, in a great measure, to the teachings and example of their master—a pure Christian.

He was accustomed to say to them:

“By whatever sectarian name you choose to call yourselves matters little; be Christian. ‘The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.’ ‘For there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved but that of Christ.’”

Old ‘Sias being asked one day by a stranger as to his religious faith and experience answered that he was Christian, and his law of life was love of God and his neighbor.

The people loved their master well. Not one left him when emancipation was proclaimed. Even the young men, who longed to see life, would not leave old master while he should live on earth.

Old Cleve was the friend, teacher and patriarch of his people.

Never in his life, however, had the old man been so happy as at present. The society of Stuart, Palma and their babies opened new springs of joy in his heart and home. He loved to spend hours reclining in his easy-chair on the piazza, with the young mother seated near him and the infants in their pretty basket cradle beside her, while Mrs. Pole would be looking after household affairs within, and Stuart would be supervising agricultural matters afield.

The twins were little more than two months old when John Cleve saw, or thought he saw, a growing likeness be-

tween the tiny Clarice and the angel for whom she was named. As for him, he was waiting the call to come and rejoin his own Clarice in one of the many mansions of our Father's house.

Nor was the summons long delayed.

It was a lovely morning in May.

The vale was more like than ever to a Garden of Eden. It was a chalice full of bloom, fragrance and music lifted up in offering to Heaven.

Stuart was absent on horseback, riding from field to field, overlooking the workmen.

All the other members of the family were gathered on the front porch.

Mrs. Pole, with a pair of shears in her hands, was walking about the place, carefully clipping a few dead leaves from the rose vines that climbed about the pillars. She had taken to gardening with as much enthusiasm as Stuart had taken to farming.

Palma sat on a little, low chair, busy with her needlework. At her feet stood the pretty basket cradle in which lay the twin babes, sleeping.

Near them sat John Cleve, reclining in a large resting-chair. His hands were folded before him, and he was gazing out upon the scene with a face illumined by reverence and serene rapture. Not a word had he spoken since the babies went to sleep. Now he murmured:

"Oh! the beauty and the glory of Thy sunlit earth and heavens, our Father.

The words seemed to issue involuntarily from the lips of the speaker in the midst of the deep silence.

"Oh! the loveliness of Thy celestial angels!" he murmured in a lower and a slower tone.

Palma looked up from her sewing.

He did not speak again.

She turned around to look at him.

He had sunk back in his chair and shrunken together. His hands lay folded on his knees, his head bowed on his chest, and his silver hair shining in the morning sunlight. His face could not possibly be whiter than it had always been since she had known him, but something else in his aspect startled and alarmed her.

She sprang up and went to him, bent over him, and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Uncle! Uncle!" she said softly but eagerly, anxiously—"Uncle!"

"Don't distress—yourself, dear—it is all right—bless you."

These were his last words. His whole slight frame seemed to collapse and shrink closer together, his head sank lower, his hands slipped apart and dropped down by his sides.

When Mrs. Pole, startled by some sound, hurried to the spot, she found Palma in a panic of grief and amazement too deep for utterance, standing over the lifeless body of the good old man.

Mrs. Pole in great emergencies had but little self-possession.

She threw up her hands in horror, and then ran wildly in and out of the house, shrieking:

"Polly! Hatty! 'Sias;"

And as the frightened servants came running at her call, the women from the kitchen, the man from the lawn, they found the young mistress down on the floor at the feet of the dead master, with her hands clasped around his knees and her head bowed upon them, sobbing as if her heart must break. Tears had come and broken the trance of sorrow.

"Run for the doctor! Run for Mr. Stuart! Run all of you!" cried Mrs. Pole.

And the servants ran in all directions to spread the news or to bring efficient help.

Mrs. Pole went to Palma.

"Get up, my dear child! Let me help you up."

"Don't—don't," gasped Palma in a smothered tone.

"Come, come with me," persisted the woman, taking hold of her arm and trying to lift her.

"Leave me! Leave me!" cried the mourner, clinging the closer to her dead, and continuing obdurate to all entreaty.

Cleve Stuart, found and summoned by 'Sias, soon came galloping up to the house, threw himself off his horse and hurried up on the porch.

One look of awe, sorrow and reverence to the changed face of his uncle showed him what had happened. Then he looked on his wife.

"Make her get up, sir. Do make her get up. I can't get her to move from that!" sobbed Mrs. Pole.

"When did this happen?" inquired Stuart in a low tone.

"Not twenty minutes ago, I reckon, though I'm not sure. It was as quick as lightning. One moment he was talking bright and cheerful, and the next moment he was gone like a flash! Oh! make her get up, sir. She will kill herself."

"Palma, dear, you must let me take you in," he said, laying his hand gently on the bowed head of his wife.

But sobs were her only reply.

"Palma, we will have to take him in and lay him on his bed. Come with me first."

But she only wept and sobbed.

With gentle force he took her arms from around the dead, lifted her, bore her into the parlor, laid her on the sofa and called Polly to attend her.

He returned to the porch, told Mrs. Pole to look after the babies and leave everything else to him, and called the grief-stricken 'Sias to help him to carry the dead into the house.

It was a very light weight for so tall and broad-shouldered a man, but, then, it was but little more than skin and bone, a human chrysalis.

They bore it to the chamber in the rear of the parlor on the ground floor, that had been John Cleve's sleeping-room. Here they laid it on the bed to await the arrival of the family physician. The latter could do no good, but all the same he must come.

Not until afternoon could the busy country doctor, whose practice extended over many miles, be found and brought to Wolfscliff.

He was conducted by Stuart to the room of death.

"A death from old age, pure and simple," was the verdict of science.

"Did you ever see a body more thoroughly consumed by the life of the spirit? I have known Mr. Cleve all my life, as my father and my grandfather knew him before me, and I never knew of, or heard of, his having a day's illness," concluded Dr. Osborne as they sat together beside the bed.

"He was a saint prepared for heaven," reverently replied the young man.

Then they arose, and standing on each side of the bed,

drew the sheet up over the calm, cold face and left the room together.

The doctor went away, kindly offering to transact any business that was now required for the family and for the deceased at Wolfswalk.

Stuart went to inquire about the condition of his wife.

Polly had put her to bed, and Mrs. Pole had laid her sleeping infants in with her, the one on her right side and the other on her left. They were the best sedatives, for the tender mother was obliged to control herself for fear of disturbing them.

Mrs. Pole, now as quiet and decorous as in the morning she had been noisy and turbulent, sat in a large easy-chair, watching the three.

As Stuart softly opened the door she raised her finger in warning, and then silently arose and went to him.

"She has just fallen asleep herself. I wouldn't speak to her now, if I was you. She is sleeping very quiet," she said in a low tone.

"Thank Heaven! Take care of her, Mrs. Pole," murmured Cleve in a low tone as he withdrew.

Mrs. Pole closed the door and went back to resume her watch.

Three days later the mortal body of John Cleve, of Wolfsciff, was borne to the family burial ground on the plateau on one of the hills that looked up to the sky. It was followed by a great concourse of people, consisting of kindred, friends, servants and neighbors from far and near.

The services were concluded there, with these few words of such divine love and truth that I quote them here for the comfort they may give to all sorrowing souls who grieve because they think, and think wrongly, that they have laid their loved ones in the grave.

The minister said:

" 'And now, having performed the last service of love to our dear brother by laying his body in the earth from which it came, we leave it there, as he has left it, to follow him by faith to his eternal home.' "

Will my readers note the use of the pronouns there? There is deep meaning in that.

After the obsequies, life went on very calmly at Wolfsciff.

Stuart and Palma wrote every week to their friends in England, and quite as often got letters from them.

Again Ran and Judy urged Stuart and Palma to come and visit them, as there was nothing now to keep the latter at Wolfscliff. They wrote that they had given up their plan of leaving Haymore Hall to study in London. That the attractions of the country and the home were so great that they could not tear themselves away from it. That they had formed attachments not only to the place, but to the people. That they should remain there, and that the Rev. James Campbell had undertaken to direct their studies, and they expected to derive quite as much—if not more—benefit from his instructions as they could from professional teachers.

The correspondence resulted in a promise from the Stuarts to run over to England after the wheat harvest should be gathered.

It was while Stuart was thinking of setting a certain day for their embarkation and purchasing their tickets that a strange visitor arrived at Wolfscliff.

It was a glorious day in the latter part of June.

Stuart was afield, looking after the wheat.

Palma was seated on the front piazza, with her babies placed face to face in their cradle on her right hand, and her workbasket, overflowing with work, on her left.

She was singing to herself in a low key when she heard the sound of wheels on the gravel walk.

Looking up, she saw the hack from the Wolfshead tavern, at Wolfswalk, approaching. It drew up before the porch.

The coachman got off his box and went to the carriage door and opened it.

A gentleman got out—a tall, thin man of about forty years of age, with dark, reddish-brown hair and beard.

Palma laid aside her work and stood up to receive the visitor.

He came up the steps of the piazza, stopped, raised his hat, and as he looked at the childlike young matron before him, said with some hesitation:

"Mrs.—Stuart? Have I the honor of speaking to Mrs. Stuart?"

"That is my name, sir," replied Palma politely.

He bowed and handed her a card, on which she read: "The O'Melaghlin, Carrick Arghalee, Antrim, Ireland."

"Will you come into the house, sir? Mr. Stuart is not here at present, but he is not far off, and I will send for him at once," said Palma, leading the way into the hall and touching a call-bell as she passed a stand.

"Thank you, madam," said the stranger, following her.

She conducted him into the drawing-room, gave him a seat and turned to speak to Hatty, who had come in answer to the bell.

"Ask Mrs. Pole, please, to go to the children on the piazza. Then send 'Sias to look for Mr. Stuart, to tell him that there is a gentleman here waiting to see him, and give him this card," said Palma, putting the slip of pasteboard into the girl's hands.

"Is 'Sias for to gib dis to young marster?" inquired Hatty, dubiously.

"Yes, certainly. Go away now and do your errands. Go to Mrs. Pole first," said the anxious young mother. And then she sat down near the front window, through which, from time to time, she could glance out and see that no harm should come to the babies until the arrival of her relief sentinel, Mrs. Pole.

Palma was not very well versed in the ways of the world, yet she felt it incumbent on her to entertain the stranger, but she did not exactly know how to do it.

"You are recently from Ireland. I have some very dear friends of that country. Indeed, my nearest kinsman married a young girl of that nation."

"Yes; I am aware of that fact. Mr. Randolph Hay married Miss Judith Man—that brings me here to-day. But as for myself, I have not seen Ireland for twenty-one years," said the stranger.

Palma looked up in surprise.

"I have been in California, Colorado, Australia, Tasmania, Cape Colony—everywhere else but in my native land," continued the visitor.

Palma looked up inquiringly.

"And I came last from California," concluded the stranger.

Palma suddenly remembered that it was rude to stare in

silence at any one, especially at a visitor in one's own house; so she dropped her eyes and said demurely:

"I am glad you knew Judith Man, Mrs. Randolph Hay, of Haymore, my cousin by marriage."

"I don't know her at all. All the same, she is my daughter—my only daughter—and I hope to find her soon, with your assistance, and to make her acquaintance. It is for that purpose that I am here," said the stranger.

Now Palma stared in right good earnest, without once thinking whether she was rude or not. Moreover, she committed another breach of good manners—she echoed his words:

"Your daughter!" she exclaimed in astonishment and incredulity. "I never did hear of such a thing!"

"Perhaps not," said the visitor, laughing good-humoredly; "but it is true, nevertheless. And, besides, there are a great many million

" 'More things in heaven and earth'

than you ever did hear of, or ever will hear of, my dear young lady."

"I beg your pardon, sir; but indeed I was so taken by surprise!" said Palma, apologetically, and with a pretty blush.

"Not at all!" exclaimed the stranger, rather irrelevantly. "Say no more about it; but tell me something of my son and my daughter. You said nothing about my son, yet I have been told that they are both equally and intimately well known to you and to your excellent husband. What are these young people like, madam, if you please?"

"Mike and Judy? They are both lovely! Just lovely!" warmly responded Palma.

"That is exceedingly complimentary, and would be highly satisfactory, only it is not quite exact enough. A rose is lovely, so is a pearl, so is a fawn, so is a baby."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the young mother.

"So many things are lovely, you see, that to say they are lovely gives me no clear idea of them. Be more precise, dear lady."

"Oh, then, they are so good, so sweet—but I think I had better show you their photographs," said Palma, with sudden inspiration.

"The very thing!" exclaimed the visitor.

Palma sprang up and ran like an eager child to the other end of the drawing-room and to an *etagere* that stood in the corner, and took from it a large-paged but thin photograph album, with which she returned to her visitor.

"This book," she said, "contains only the pictures of our dearest friends. There are not more than thirty-three pictures in the collection; but then there are in some cases several of each person. I will show you Mike's and Judy's."

"No!" exclaimed the visitor. "Pray let me have the book and see if I can find them for myself. I have never seen them. You are naturally amazed to hear me say that, but you shall know the reason of the fact in good time," said The O'Melaghlin, as he received the book from Palma, who, having placed it in his hands, resumed her seat, watched him as he turned over the leaves, and speculated with much interest whether he would be able to identify the pictures of his son and daughter, whom he had never seen.

Presently his face lighted up.

"Here they are!" he exclaimed, pointing to the open pages that presented full-length cabinet photographs of Mike and Judy—the former being on the left-hand page and the latter on the right.

"Yes, you are right," replied Palma in surprise; "but how could you tell?"

"Because this," he replied, laying his finger on Judy's picture, "is a perfect likeness of my dear lost Moira; and this," he added, indicating Mike's, "is as like her as a youth can be like his mother."

"They are faithful likenesses of the twin brother and sister," replied Palma.

"Now tell me, my dear young lady, about my boy and girl."

"Your daughter, I have said, is sweet and good and very dear to us all who know her. To say that she is married to one of the wealthiest land owners of one of the oldest families in Yorkshire would be true, but it would not be so much as to say that her husband is one of the best, the truest, the most generous and most magnanimous of men."

"Your praise is enthusiastic, therefore extravagant."

"It could not be. Ask Judy herself."

"Ask a young woman still in love! She would be a very

impartial witness, no doubt," laughed The O'Melaghlin.
"But now about my boy?"

"He is altogether worthy of his sister and his brother-in-law. I could not say any more for him than that."

"Which is to say that he is good, true and brave."

"Yes, he is all that."

"But his objects in life?"

"To be of the best use to any whom he may serve; and the better to do this, he wishes to get a good education."

"Quite right! And he is young enough still to go to college, not being quite twenty years of age."

"Oh, I am so glad for his sake that you have come forward; because Michael has that spirit of independence that he shrinks from being indebted to his good brother-in-law for his college fees."

"Quite right is that also. He is a true O'Melaghlin, and I am proud of him! And now, my dear young lady, you may be wondering how I discovered yourself and your husband and your connection—happy connection for them—with my children."

"It has been equally happy for us, sir, indeed. Michael and Judith are among our most esteemed friends."

"I am glad to hear you say so, dear madam."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE KINGLY O'MELAGHLINS

At this moment Cleve Stuart so quietly entered the room that Palma was not aware of his entrance until he stood before her.

"Mr. O'Melaghlin—Mr. Stuart," she said, presenting the gentlemen to each other.

The visitor arose and both bowed.

"I bring a letter of introduction for you, sir, from the Messrs. Walling, of New York," said The O'Melaghlin, drawing from his breast a neat, open envelope and handing it to Mr. Stuart.

Cleve took it with a bow.

On the envelope, besides the superscription—"To Cleve

Stuart, Esq., Wolfsciff, W. V.,"—there was written between brackets, in the corner: "To introduce The O'Melaghlin, Carrick Arghalee, Antrim."

Now, the use of the definite article as the prefix of a man's surname had been a puzzle to Palma, and even a surprise to Cleve, though he remembered that in the north of Ireland, as well as in Scotland, it was affected by certain heads of families among the landed gentry of ancient lineage, and considered to outrank either plain "Mr." or "Squire." O'Melaghlin, therefore, must be recognized as The O'Melaghlin.

"With your permission," said Stuart, with a bow, as he opened the letter, which was as follows—and rather more than sarcastic in its peculiar style, as Cleve thought when he read it, though he hoped and believed that the bearer of the letter had not—if he had read the words—perceived the sarcasm:

"OFFICE OF WALLING & WALLING, Att'ys, Etc.

"New York, May 8, 187—.

"CLEVE STUART, Esq., Wolfsciff, W. V.: I have the great honor to present—you—to The O'Melaghlin, of Carrick Arghalee, Antrim, Ireland.

"The O'Melaghlin is of the most ancient Irish, royal lineage, being directly descended from the O'Melaghlin, monarchs of Meath, whose kingdom was ravaged by Henry the Second, A. D. 1173, and given to one of his thievish followers, a disreputable carpet-bagger, called Hugh de Lacy.

"The O'Melaghlin hails now from Antrim because his ancestor, Patricious O'Melaghlin, in the reign of Edward the First, 1285, married Mona, sole child and heiress of Fergus of Arghalee, and subsequently became lord of Carrick Arghalee, in right of his wife. From this illustrious pair, representing a royal and a noble family united, The O'Melaghlin is directly descended.

"It would be highly impertinent in so humble an individual as myself to write of this gentleman's merits and accomplishments. Should he honor you with his acquaintance, you will discover them for yourself. You will also hear from him in what manner you can have the distinction of serving him.

"With compliments and congratulations to yourself and Mrs. Stuart on the present proud occasion, I remain, your faithful servant,
WILLIAM WALLING."

"Will Walling is a scamp, and merits a kicking for his impudence," was Stuart's half-earnest, half-jesting mental criticism on this letter and its writer. He thought he knew the reason for Will Walling's sneers; he thought it was more than likely that The O'Melaghlin had repelled the genial Will and "kept him at a distance." He folded the letter, put it in his pocket, and once more offered his hand to the visitor, saying:

"I am very happy to see you here, sir, and shall be very much pleased if I can serve you."

"I thank you, Wolfsciff!" exclaimed The O'Melaghlin, giving his host his territorial title as if they had been in Antrim. "I thank you, sir. You have given me the hand of a friend, and although you may not at this moment recall the fact, you have given me the hand of a kinsman! Yes, sir, I am proud to say of a kinsman!" and he gave that hand a grip that crippled it for a week.

"A kinsman, O'Melaghlin!" exclaimed Cleve—he would have given great offense if he had addressed his guest as Mr. O'Melaghlin—"I am very much flattered, but I do not understand!"

"Ah, then, Wolfsciff, is not your family name Stuart?"

"Certainly."

"And have you not a lawful right to that name?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And do you not spell it S-t-u-a-r-t?"

"I do."

"Then you are my kinsman on the distaff side! Yes, there is but one root of the tree of Stuart, and that is the old royal root that grew fast in Scottish ground, and every one who lawfully bears the name of Stuart is a leaf of that same tree."

"Granted," said Cleve, with perhaps a faint leaven of sinful pride, "granted that my ancestor seven generations back was Charles Stuart, called the Young Pretender, how should that make us kinsmen?"

"I am afraid, young Wolfsciff, that you do not keep your-

self well posted up in your family genealogy," said The O'Melaghlin.

"Indeed I do not," replied Stuart, with a laugh. "I fear I know little or nothing with certainty of my family on either side the house previous to their emigration to America. Why, O'Melaghlin, do you know if I could become a candidate for the highest office in this country, and knew who was my grandfather, it would be a grave objection to me in the minds of this democratic and republican people—unless, indeed, I could prove that he was a tramp, a gypsy, or, at the very best, a day laborer!"

The O'Melaghlin stroked his long, rusty red beard and slowly shook his head.

"The human race is going to ruin," he said.

"But will you kindly explain how it is that we are of kin, sir?" said Palma hesitatingly.

"Surely, my dear young lady—surely. The facts are these: From prehistoric ages, in the dark before the dawn of time or of its record, to which the memory of mankind goeth not back. The O'Melaghlin's were monarchs of Munster."

"And lived in caves, and dressed in skins, and when a young king wanted a wife he walked into the next kingdom with his club on his shoulders, knocked down the first young girl he saw and brought her away on his back. Was it not so?" archly suggested Palma.

"Faith! I think you are right, ma'am. Since the O'Melaghlin's go back to the darkest of days, they must have had the manners of the same," said the chieftain, good-humoredly.

"Well, please go on. I will try not to interrupt you again."

"The O'Melaghlin's were monarchs of Meath for unnumbered generations before the Christian era, and for eleven centuries and a half after. Somewhere about the year 1160 Henry the Second—bad luck to the beast!—made the conquest of Ireland, ravaged the kingdom of Meath, and gave the land to a thieving carpet-bagger of his own, Hugh de Lacy by name. Ah! but The O'Melaghlin's, turned out of their own, made short work of the usurper and murdered him in his stolen castle of Thrim. It was of no avail. His

successors came after him, backed up by the power of the Saxon. The O'Melaghlin's were scattered far and wide."

"One of the tragedies of history," said Stuart.

"True for you, O'Wolfscliff! The next memorable apoch in the history of that r'yal family fell in the reign of Edward the First, in the year 1270, more than a century after the conquest of Meath. Then the young head of the family—The O'Melaghlin of that apoch—married the Lady Mona, sole child and heiress of Fergus of Arghalee, surnamed the Tiger, and in due time, in right of his wife, succeeded to the chieftainship and became The O'Melaghlin of Carrick Arghalee! That, sir and madam, was the first step taken toward a union with the r'yal house of Scotland, from which you, sir, descended."

(The chieftain, when interested or excited, sometimes slipped into dialect.)

"Indeed!" exclaimed Stuart, rather mystified, for he did not as yet see the road to the royal alliance.

"Now then," continued The O'Melaghlin, "that marriage was the first step, as I said. Nearly two centuries passed before the second step was taken. But then, centuries don't count for much with old historic families whose origin is only lost in the ancient, prehistoric ages. It was in the year 1380, in the reign of Robert the Second, King of Scotland, that Randolph of Arghalee married the Lady Grauch, daughter of the Earl of Fife, who was the second son of the reigning monarch. D'ye moind, that's where the r'yal blood comes in, and our kinship, more betoken! So shake hands upon it, Wolfscliff."

Stuart good-humoredly put out his hand, already half crippled by O'Melaghlin's first clasp, and received a second crushing grip.

"And now will you kindly inform me how I can be of service to you?" inquired the host.

"Thank you, sir, certainly. I wish to find my children, Michael and Judith. I was told by Mr. Walling that you would be able to give me their exact address, which he said was in London somewhere, but he could not tell where."

While The O'Melaghlin spoke Stuart stared and Palma laughed. She felt a child's delight at his astonishment in discovering that The O'Melaghlin was the father of Michael Man and Judith Hay.

"Oh!" said the visitor, "you are surprised, sure, to hear me say this, but they are my children, for all that I have never set eyes on them in my life. It was not my fault, but the fate made by circumstances, that kept us apart. It is a painful story, sir, that I may tell you later at your convenience. Now I wish to ask you where, in all the great wilderness of London, I may find my children."

"Nowhere in London. They are not there. They have changed their plans, and will remain for some time to come at Haymore Hall."

"Surely I thought they were going to London for private tuition."

"They can obtain that better, perhaps, at Haymore."

"Ay?"

"Perhaps, O'Melaghlin, you would like to see your daughter's last letter to my wife," kindly suggested Stuart.

"Ay, that I would, if Mrs. Stuart has no objections, and it is very kind of you to offer to show it to me, and I thank you, Wolfscliff," heartily responded the visitor.

And before he had finished speaking Palma had darted away in search of her letter box. She soon returned with it, sat down, placed it on her lap, opened it and took out a bundle of letters, from which she selected one to hand it to the visitor.

He quickly snatched it, and with an almost greedy look, so eager was the father to read the words of his unknown daughter.

He "devoured" the contents of that letter, though none of its words could speak of him, who was equally unknown to his daughter, and although they only told of household and neighborhood news, and of their changed plans in regard to the scene of their studies and the person of their tutor.

When he had dwelt on the letter as long as possible he returned it to its owner with manifest reluctance and cast covetous glances at the pile of letters from which it had been drawn.

"Would you like to read all your daughter's letters? You can, of course, if you wish it, sir," said Palma kindly.

"Oh, madam, if you would be so good as to let me do so," gratefully replied the father.

"Here they are, then, about twenty of them in all, and

they are long letters. Take them and read them at your leisure. Now there is the dinner bell. You will join us, I hope."

"Thank you, my dear madam; but I am just off a long journey, and hardly persentable in a sitting-room, much less at a dinner table," said The O'Melaghlin, glancing down at his dusty garments.

"Oh, never mind. We are plain country people," said Palma, with a smile; for having lived in a crowded city all her life, with the exception of one short season at "Lull's," she took pride in thinking of herself as a country woman.

"If you would like to go to a room to brush off a little, I should be pleased to show you the way," said Stuart.

"Thank you, Wolfscliff, I think I would if it will not delay your dinner or spoil your soup. Now speak frankly. There should be candor among kinsmen."

"It will spoil nothing," put in Palma, knowing that Cleve could not answer that question, "so, Mr. Stuart, please show The O'Melaghlin to the oak room."

Cleve turned with a bow to his guest and led the way out.

Palma rang the bell and gave orders that the soup should be kept back for fifteen minutes.

In due time The O'Melaghlin reappeared in the drawing-room, and the small party went in to dinner.

In the course of that meal Stuart said to Palma:

"My dear, The O'Melaghlin has kindly promised to remain with us a few days, and has sent back his chaise to the Wolfshead to fetch his baggage."

"I am very much pleased to hear this," said Palma, turning with a bright smile to the visitor.

"Thank you, madam! You may wonder, perhaps, why I should have chosen to travel all the way down from New York to West Virginia to get from you the London address of my children, when I might have written to you and got it by return mail."

"No; indeed, I never once thought of it in that manner."

"Well, I may as well tell you how it was. When I learned from Mr. Walling that my children were in London, I determined to go there as soon as possible. And knowing what a rush there is across the big pond at this season of the year, I went to get my passage secured in the first available

steamer. But, bless you! though I went to every office of ocean steamers in New York, and wrote to every one in Boston, I could get no sort of a passage in any one for the next six weeks. The first one I could engage was for the first of July, in the steamer *Leviathan* for Southampton."

"Why! Are you going by the *Leviathan*? We are going by that ship!" impulsively exclaimed Palma.

"You are!" cried The O'Melaghlin, appealing to Stuart.

"Indeed we are!" responded the latter.

"Delight upon delight! That is almost too good to be true! Well, I am overjoyed to hear this! Now to resume my explanation why I came to you instead of writing: Finding that I had three weeks upon my hands I said to myself: 'I will not write to get meager news. I will go down to West Virginia and see these near connections of my unknown children, and I will talk with them and get from them every detail of my son's and daughter's lives and characters.' And so here I am."

"And now that you are here, O'Melaghlin, we hope that you will stay with us until the day comes when we must all leave Wolfsciff for New York to embark on our voyage," said Stuart.

The visitor turned and looked inquiringly on the lady's face.

"Oh, yes, do, Mr. O'Melaghlin. We should be so happy to have you!" she exclaimed, in response to that mute appeal.

"You do me much honor, sir and madam. And to be frank with you, there is nothing on my part to prevent my acceptance and enjoyment of your kindness and hospitality," replied The O'Melaghlin in modest words, but with a pompous manner.

Palma then withdrew and left the two men over their claret, and went to put her babies to bed. When this sweet duty was done she returned to the drawing-room, where she was soon joined by Stuart and O'Melaghlin.

And there, later in the evening, the latter told his story. It was the common story of a race of men and a fine estate falling into decadence from generation to generation. This The O'Melaghlin, in telling the tale, attributed to the misfortunes of the family, and the persecutions of the Saxon. But to those who could read between the lines, even of his

version, it was self-evident that the downfall of the house was due to the vice and folly of its representatives.

Few men in the position of The O'Melaghlin would tell such a story with perfect frankness. Certainly he did not so tell his. And therefore it seems necessary, in the interests of truth, that it should be told by me.

With the exception of those absurd traditions of the prehistoric period of which no one can know anything, the proud family record of The O'Melaghlin, previous to their degradation, was in the main true, as every student of Irish history knows. But for a century past The O'Melaghlin of Arghalee had been fast livers, hard drinkers and reckless sinners. In every generation, every succeeding heir had come into his patrimony poorer in purse, prouder in spirit, and weaker in will to resist evil than any of his predecessors.

At length, about twenty-five years before the period of which I write, young Michael O'Melaghlin, at the age of twenty-one, came into the remnant of the grand old estate, consisting then of the half-ruined castle of Arghalee and a few acres of sterile land immediately around it.

He was the last of his family, and would have been alone in the world but that he loved and was beloved by a good and beautiful girl, well born, like himself; an orphan, like himself; poor, like himself, and even poorer, since she had not so much as a ruinous house and an acre of ground.

Moirá MacDuinheld lived with distant relatives in the neighborhood of Arghalee.

They were not kind to her; they grudged her the cost of her maintenance; and when young Michael O'Melaghlin came courting her, they encouraged his suit that they might get rid of their burden; and they let him marry her, although they knew they were delivering her to poverty and privation, if to nothing worse.

Michael then married Moirá with the full consent of her kindred, and took her home to his dilapidated, rat-infested, raven-haunted, storm-beaten old donjon keep, which was all that was left of the castle of Arghalee.

But soon the young pair began to suffer the bitterest pangs of poverty. We cannot go into detail here. Let it be sufficient to say that often they had not enough to eat, even of the plainest food. But, although "poverty had come in at the door, love did not fly out of the window," for they

loved each other more faithfully, because more pitifully, for all their privations and sufferings. And here comes in the insanity of pride. Both Michael and Moira were strong, healthy, able-bodied young people, and could each have obtained work in the neighborhood; Michael as a farm laborer, if nothing more—and he could have done little more, for he had but very little education, and Moira might have become a laundress—a trade easily acquired. But for an O'Melaghlin—a descendant of the ancient monarchs of Meath—to work! No! In the narrow, one-idea mind of the impoverished chieftain it was more noble to starve and to see his young wife starve, or to accept alms, and deem the bestower to be highly honored in being permitted to minister to the needs of The O'Melaghlin.

But hunger is a mighty factor in the affairs of life. It is said to have civilized the world. At least it exercised a very powerful influence upon these two healthy young people, who were almost always hungry, seldom having enough of oatmeal or potatoes on any day to satisfy their robust appetites. And when they had suffered this hunger for several months, and saw nothing but hunger in all the future, The O'Melaghlin suddenly resolved to sell all the remainder of his land, except one acre upon which his ruined tower stood—the oldest, as it was also the only part of the great castle now in existence—and with the money he might get for them go with his young wife to the gold fields of California. There, in the far-off foreign land, where he would not be known, he would seek for the gold that should restore the fortunes of his family. Upon whomsoever the gold fever fastens it fills with a furore.

Gold was The O'Melaghlin's thought by day and his dream by night. Gold seeking, he persuaded himself, was not work—or at least it was not work for hire; and, besides, he would be a stranger in a strange land; and no one at home here in Antrim should ever be able to say that The O'Melaghlin had ever soiled his hands or blotted his 'scutcheon with labor!

He sold four acres of his land for little more than enough money to take himself and his wife, by way of Glasgow, to San Francisco. He was offered nearly twice as much money if he would sell the remaining acre with the ancient tower upon it.

But at the proposal The O'Melaghlin grew furious and insolent.

What! Sell the very donjon keep, the last stronghold of The O'Melaghlin of Arghalee? Many a time had the Saxons besieged the castle, and sometimes they had taken the outworks, but never the donjon keep. And now he would see their island scuttled in the midst and sunk between its four seas, like the rotten old craft that it was, before he would sell his tower and the last acre of ground on which it stood.

Though why this jeremiad should have been uttered against "the Saxon," when it was an Irishman and a near relative who wanted to buy his old owl roost, no one but The O'Melaghlin himself could have explained.

His dream was to realize a fabulous fortune from the gold fields and come back and restore the tower, rebuild the castle and repurchase all the land sold by his forefathers for generations past. To do all this would require a vast fortune; but would he not make that fortune?

Heaven and earth! Did not many a common bit of human clay without family or name of the least value make a large fortune in the gold fields? When, then, The O'Melaghlin stooped to seek the ore, would not the earth open wide her bosom of uncounted treasures and lavish gold upon him?

The O'Melaghlin never doubted for an instant that she would.

So in due time The O'Melaghlin and his wife sailed from Glasgow, bound for San Francisco.

They went in the first cabin of the *Golden Glory*. Do you think The O'Melaghlin would take second place in any circumstances? No, he would die first!

When they reached San Francisco he took a room for himself and wife at one of the very best hotels, which was also, of course, one of the most expensive in the city.

He gave his name to the office clerk as:

"The O'Melaghlin," which that hurried and distracted individual incontinently put down as:

T. O. Mannikin.

CHAPTER XXXIV

PARENTAGE OF MIKE AND JUDY

THE young pair had been in the city only a few days when, after diligent inquiries in all possible directions, O'Melaghlin heard a rumor of a rich new field of gold in the Black Rock Ridges, some fifty miles from the city, and of a party of adventurers about forming to start for that point.

O'Melaghlin determined to join that expedition.

His young wife, Moira, was much too delicate just at this time to accompany him.

He left her at the hotel with nearly all the little money he had to bear her expenses during his absence, which he promised should be as short as possible.

He said he would come back to see her about the time she might be able to return with him.

Then he went away, and Moira remained at the hotel.

It seemed a cruel act so to leave a young wife, who was expecting within four or five weeks to become a mother; but The O'Melaghlin had the gold fever in its most malignant form, and had even infected her with the fell disease.

She also had feverish and delirious hallucinations concerning the imaginary golden days that were dawning upon them, of which, indeed, her present elegant and luxurious surroundings in this palace hotel seemed a prophecy and a foretaste. Never in her life had Moira seen, dreamed or imagined such magnificence as this public house presented to her. And to make such a superb style of living their own for life was worth some present sacrifice of each other's society for a little while. So she willingly let her husband depart with the gold-seekers, and whenever she felt very lonesome without him she just shut her eyes and called up the inward vision of the gorgeous future.

Yet there were moods in which she grew too deeply impressed to look beyond the immediate, impending trial, bringing certain pain and danger and possible death before giving her, if it should ever give her, the crown of a woman's life—maternity.

She had made some few pleasant acquaintances among the ladies who were boarding at the hotel, and who were

charmed by the artless and confiding manners of this beautiful wild Irish girl—or child-woman. And when they discovered her fears they laughed her into courage again, telling her that such dark forebodings as hers were quite an indispensable part of the program, and every mother among them all had been through it. And they spoke the truth, as every doctor knows.

But this hotel was a house patronized by travelers and transient boarders only.

The ladies who had made Moira's acquaintance and become her friends one after another went their way, and she was left alone.

True, others came. Every day they came and went. Some stayed a few hours; some stayed a few days. Among these were women who would have been very kind to the lonely young stranger if they had had the chance. But they had not. They never saw her, or saw to notice her.

With her increasing infirmities, the young wife, when daily expecting to become a mother, grew very shy and timid. She seldom went down into the ladies' parlor—that neutral ground upon which acquaintances are sometimes made, and even friendships occasionally formed; and when she did go for a little change, she would conceal herself between the curtain and sash of some front window, and so, hidden from the company, look out upon the brilliant life of Sacramento Street until the utter weariness that now so frequently overcame her strength compelled her to creep away to the repose of her own private apartment.

Toward the last of her life she gave up entirely going to the ladies' parlor, and confined her walk to the stairs and halls between her bedchamber and the public dining-room.

This walk was her only exercise, her only change of scene, and she continued it daily to the last day of her life.

She made no new acquaintances in place of those who had gone away. She had no friend except an humble one in the chambermaid who attended to her room. In many respects she was worse off in this elegant and luxurious house than she would have been in the rudest log cabin of a mining camp, for here, though she had everything else, she lacked what she would have got there—human companionship and sympathy.

Often she longed—wildly longed—to see or hear from her husband, but knew that it was impossible for her to do so.

Yet she had one great stay and comfort—her Christian faith. She was devoutly religious and spent much time in her room in reading the Bible, or some book of devotion, or in prayer, or in singing in a low tone some favorite hymn.

So the time passed until about six weeks after The O'Melaghlin had gone away to seek his fortune, when there came a change. She fell too ill to go down to dinner that evening.

The friendly chambermaid, who volunteered to bring her a cup of tea, also offered to spend the night with her.

Moira gratefully accepted these services.

Before midnight the girl had to call the night watchman and get him to send a messenger out for the nearest physician, who came promptly in answer to the call.

Moira saw the sun rise once more for the last time. Then she died, leaving behind her a pair of healthy twins—a boy and a girl.

Her death was so sudden, so unexpected, that it seemed as if a bright, strong torch had been instantly inverted and extinguished.

Then there was a commotion and a sensation in the hotel.

Where was the husband of the dead woman, the father of the motherless babes?

The office book was searched to see who was the party who had taken Room 777 seven weeks previous, and the register showed the name of T. O. Mannikin and wife, Ogly, Ireland. This was the manner in which the hurried clerk of the hotel had heard and entered the name and address of The O'Melaghlin.

The attendant physician gave his certificate as to the natural cause of death, so that there was no need of a coroner's inquest.

But there had to be a thorough search made through the effects of the dead woman for clews to friends or relatives, who should be notified of her decease.

Nothing was found; not a letter, not even a line of writing except those of the receipts, for she had paid punctually every week up to the Saturday before her fatal illness. The poor young pair had no correspondents anywhere.

Nor was there any money found. Her very last dollar

had been paid away for her last week's board, and there was nothing left to satisfy the claims of the doctor or the nurse, to pay the funeral expenses or to provide for the orphan twins.

There was no end of gossip in the house. Dress, fashion, operas, even mining stocks were temporarily forgotten in the discussion of this sad and strange event. It was then decided among the worldly wise that the name Mannikin was only an assumed one, that the husband had deserted the wife, or more probably, the destroyer had abandoned his prey.

Human nature, sinful as it is called, is nowhere quite heartless.

A purse was made up among the people of the house to defray the expenses of the young stranger's funeral. And on the fifth day after her death her remains were laid in the Lone Mountain Cemetery.

The motherless babes were taken in charge by the monthly nurse, a Mrs. Mally, who, in a fit of benevolence that did not last long, adopted them and carried them to her own home.

The personal effects of the poor dead young mother, which were not of much value indeed, but which might have been detained by the proprietors of the hotel for the last few days of unpaid board, were given by them into the keeping of Nurse Mally, either for the benefit of the babes or of any claimant who might prove to have the best right to them.

As for the ministering physician, like most of the men of his humane profession, he waived all claim to remuneration for his services.

Mrs. Mally soon found the pursuit of her own regular calling and the care of the orphaned infants too much for her "nerves."

Sin is the outcome of so many causes—hereditary, taint, faulty training, temptation and opportunity.

Mrs. Mally was affected by all these. She slowly made up her mind to keep the dead mother's wardrobe, trinkets and books and to dispose of the babies. She would not hurt them; not for the world! But she would put them in a haven where, in truth, they would be much better taken care of than by any poor, hard-working woman like herself.

So one evening she dressed them in their very best clothes and gave them each a dose of paregoric, not enough to endanger their little lives—she knew her business too well for that—but to put them into a deep sleep.

When it was dark she got a large market basket with a strong handle, folded a clean cradle blanket and laid it in the bottom of it, took another little blanket and laid it in loose so that its edges came up over those of the receptacle.

Then she wrapped the sleeping babies up carefully, put them in the bottom, laid comfortably at each end with their feet passing each other in the middle, covered them over with the double folds of the upper blanket, and so done up like a pastry cook's turn-over pie, she took them in the basket on her arm and carried them out into the dimly lighted back streets and off into the country to the infant asylum of the Holy Maternity. She had not far to go. When she reached the gate, which stood always open for the reception of such piteous little human waifs as infant outcasts, she went in and up to the gable end of the building, where stood the cage to receive the poor, naked, fatherless, motherless human birdlings. It was a large oriel window, about breast high from the ground.

She rang the bell at the side of the window. It swung open and around, bearing attached on its inner side a soft, warm nest, or small cradle.

Mrs. Mally took the sleeping infants from the basket, one by one, and placed them in the nest, tucked them snugly in, put the two cradle blankets, folded, over them, and then rang the bell again. The window-sash with the nest swung round and inward, and so the abandoned babes were received within the sheltering arm of the "Holy Maternity," and no questions asked. We know the rest of their lives so far as they have yet lived.

Mrs. Mally went home with her empty basket, and that night missed the babes so much that she wept with contrition and loneliness.

The next day she hunted up every article of infant wear belonging to the twins, washed and ironed all that was soiled, then packed them into the basket, and when night came she went once more to the asylum and rang at the receiving window. Again the nest swung outward, and she

put into it, no baby, but a quantity of babies' clothing, then rang the bell again and the offering was swung inward.

Then Mrs. Mally went home with the empty basket, relieved.

During all this time The O'Melaghlin lay ill of a long, lingering fever in the mining camp under the shadow of the great Black Rock Ridges.

He had not been utterly unsuccessful during the first days of trial before he succumbed to the fierce onset of his disease. He was as kindly cared for by his companions as circumstances would permit. He had no orthodox medical attendance. A Mexican Indian, an herb doctress, came and nursed him. Her simple ministrations, with the aid of pure air, pure water, nature and a good constitution, saved his life.

But his great mental trouble of anxiety to see or hear from his young wife, left alone in the city hotel, tended to retard his recovery, which was very tedious.

His mates had prospered in their search for gold. The mine promised to hold out, and not run out as so many did. So, finding that the sick man's anxiety to see his young wife far outweighed his craving for the gold mine, they made up a liberal purse among themselves to send him on his way rejoicing.

As soon as he was able to walk he set out on foot from the mining camp. He was accompanied half a day's journey by a couple of his companions, who brought him as far as a friendly Indian's hut and there bade him good-by, leaving him to rest for the afternoon and spend the night, while they retraced their steps to the mining camp.

Early the next morning The O'Melaghlin resumed his journey and dragged himself by slow stages of ten or fifteen miles a day, stopping at night in miner's, hunter's or Indian's hut, according as either offered shelter near the close of evening.

And so at length he reached the city late one autumn night, and went straight to the hotel where he had left his young wife.

There he learned that she had been dead and buried for more than a month past, and that the twins to which she had given birth were in the care of the professional nurse, Mrs. Mandy Mally, of Cyprus Lane.

But he scarcely heard this last item of intelligence.

The shock of the first fatal news, coming as it did after the wasting of his long illness and the weariness of his long tramp, quite overwhelmed The O'Melaghlin.

He fell senseless to the floor.

He was taken up and sent to the casual ward of a public hospital, where he suffered a severe relapse that confined him to his bed for many weeks.

Upon his second recovery, as soon as he was discharged from the hospital he went in search of the monthly nurse who had taken charge of poor Moira's babes.

He found the woman in a very small house in a very narrow back street.

She looked scared when she was confronted with the father of the children whom she had sent away.

But she soon recovered her self-control. She told him how she had disposed of the children, and excused herself by calling his attention to the poverty of herself, her house and her surroundings, and to the necessity of her going out to work.

The O'Melaghlin accepted all her apologies. He did not blame her in the least. He thought it best for the children to be under the care of the Sisterhood of the Holy Maternity; and he told her so.

He left the nurse, and went out to find some cheap lodgings where he could hide himself and his misery for a few days until he should be able to come to some understanding with himself and strike out some plan for the future.

He wished to go and see his children at the asylum, and yet he dreaded the trial; he could not get up resolution to do so. They had been the cause—though the innocent one—of their mother's death, and so he shrank from looking upon their infant faces.

Besides, the pride of The O'Melaghlin winced at the thought of going and facing the Sisters of that house and owning himself the father of those destitute infants, without either taking them away at once or making some provision for their support in the institution; and he could neither take charge of them himself nor provide for them anywhere. He was at this time too bitterly poor.

No, he said to himself, he could do no better for the children than to leave them there in that safe, happy and

Christian home. He would keep track of them, he told himself, and if ever he should be able he would take them away.

And without ever having looked upon the faces of his children he left California for Australia, shipping himself as a man before the mast on a large merchantman bound from San Francisco to Sydney.

I must hasten over the remainder of The O'Melaghlin's story.

From the day of his embarkation for Australia he became a wanderer over the face of the earth, chiefly among the mines. His gold fever, suspended for a time by his grief for the loss of his wife, revived with tenfold force, so that "the last state of that man was worse than the first."

He visited Australia, Tasmania, the Sandwich Islands, New Zealand, Cape Colony and other places, but finally returned to Australia, where at last he found fortune.

By the mere accident of idly poking his staff in the ground one day while sitting down to rest, on his way through the bush, he struck ore—rich gold—that turned out one of the greatest mines in that region.

It would be tedious to tell all the processess by which he realized a colossal fortune, or by what slow degrees he returned to the worthy ambition of his youth to restore the fortunes of his family by repurchasing, at any advance of price, their lost land, and rebuilding, at any cost, their ruined castle.

When he had renewed his resolution to do all this, he first thought of getting married to perpetuate the house of O'Melaghlin—although at this period of his life he was not at all a marrying man, preferring "the free, unhoused condition" of a bachelor. Then suddenly he recalled to mind his deserted and almost forgotten children. If these were living he had a son and a daughter to carry down his name to the future; for should his son be dead and his girl living, whoever should marry the heiress of The O'Melaghlin must take the name of O'Melaghlin.

So, should either of his long neglected children be living, he need not be driven to get married at all—which would be a great relief.

He settled up all his affairs in Australia and sailed for California.

When he reached San Francisco he went immediately to the asylum where his children had been received.

I need not follow the father in every step of the weary search he had in tracing them from the asylum to their places of apprenticeship; from these places—with the aid of skilful detectives—to the mining camp of Grizzly Gulch, from that to the fort and thence to New York.

In New York, from the Wallings, he heard the most satisfactory news of both, but especially of the daughter, who, he was told, had married a wealthy young Englishman of ancient family and of large landed estate, and who had gone to England with her husband, taking her brother along with them.

Mr. Walling could not give the inquiring father the address of the young people, whom he believed to be somewhere in London, living quietly, and pursuing their studies to make up for their long neglected education.

But he referred the O'Melaghlin to Mr. Cleve Stuart, of Wolfsciff, West Virginia, who would be able to satisfy him on every point.

The O'Melaghlin, having nearly four weeks of time on hand before the sailing of the steamer, which was the first on which he could secure a passage to Liverpool, resolved, instead of writing for information from Mr. Stuart, to go down to Wolfsciff and have a personal interview with the parties who had been intimate with his son and daughter, and who would be able to give him every particular of their character, personal appearance and history.

And so, as has been seen, he came to Wolfsciff.

The O'Melaghlin was deeply pleased with every circumstance of his reception there; with the cordial welcome of the young master and mistress of the house, with the discovery which he honestly thought he had made of a worthy kinsman in the person of Cleve Stuart, a descendant, as O'Melaghlin himself claimed to be, on his mother's side, of the royal house of Scotland.

But more than all was he pleased with the account he heard from his host and hostess of his long neglected son and daughter.

"You will be hearing from these young people every week, will ye not, Wolfsciff?" he inquired that evening, after having finished his story.

"My wife hears from her cousin Judith by almost every English mail," answered Cleve.

"And you'll be getting a letter in a day or so?"

"Yes, most likely."

"And, of course, answering it?"

"Of course! That is, my wife will! As I hinted before, the correspondence of the two families is kept up by Palma and Judith."

"Ah! So then you are the scribe, Mistress Stuart?"

"Oh, yes," answered Palma, smiling.

"And you are thinking, ma'am, what a grand piece of news you will have to tell your friend in your very next letter."

"Indeed, I am thinking of just such a delight!" exclaimed Palma, her eyes fairly dancing with anticipation.

"Then I am almost sorry to debar you from such a pleasure, ma'am, but I must beseech you not to make known my existence to my son and daughter until we meet them in England face to face," said O'Melaghlin solemnly.

"Oh!" exclaimed Palma, with a look of great disappointment.

"I have good reasons for my request, and I will tell them to you. Your husband, my friend Wolfscilff there, will understand them. I wish to be introduced to the young ones simply as The O'Melaghlin. They have probably never heard that name before in all their lives. They can never suspect its connection with themselves——"

"Do I understand you really, O'Melaghlin? Do you wish to be presented as a stranger to your own son and daughter?" inquired Stuart in perplexity.

"That is just exactly what I do wish," replied the Irishman.

"But why?" inquired Stuart, while Palma looked the same question with great, dilated eyes.

"In the first place, I wish to make a quiet observation of them while yet they consider me a mere ordinary, uninteresting stranger, with whom they can be at perfect ease, and show themselves as they really are with perfect freedom."

"But don't you suppose they could do that with their own father, knowing him to be their father who had come to seek them out, to find them, to make up to them—and to himself as well—for their long separation from him—don't

you suppose they could feel at ease and act with freedom in the presence of such a father?" demanded Stuart.

"No, I don't!" emphatically retorted The O'Melaghlin. "Under the circumstances, I don't believe they could either feel easy or behave naturally. They would be so surprised, so amazed——"

"But if they were carefully prepared for the meeting beforehand," suggested Stuart.

"I doubt if you could prepare them for so strange a meeting. But granting that you could, still they would be so filled with wonder and curiosity, so anxious to do their duty, so eager to make a good impression, that, as I said before, it would be impossible for them to feel comfortably or behave naturally. No, you must present me to your friends, Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay, simply as your kinsman, The O'Melaghlin of Arghalee. You may write and ask permission to bring your kinsman to Haymore Hall," concluded the chieftain.

"It would not be necessary to ask permission. Indeed, it would hurt my friend Ran for me to do so. He would have us all treat his house as our own, and bring whom we pleased, without ceremony, taking much more than his permission for granted, even taking his delight to welcome any of our friends, for granted," replied Stuart.

"Ah, then, sure he is a whole-souled, great-hearted fellow, this husband of my Judy! This son-in-law of my own! And I shall be proud to make his acquaintance. Troth, he should have been an Irishman!" warmly exclaimed The O'Melaghlin. "And now," he added, turning suddenly around to Palma, "do you understand, ma'am, why I wish to meet my son and daughter as a stranger, and to observe them for a whole day or an evening before making myself known to them?"

"Perfectly, Mr. O'Melaghlin. And I think you are quite right," warmly responded Palma.

"I thank you, ma'am, for your indorsement of my judgment. And now, my dear young lady, will you oblige me in one small matter?" he gravely inquired.

"In anything, great or small, that lies within my power, Mr. O'Melaghlin," smiled Palma.

"Then, my dear young lady, will you graciously drop the 'mister' before my name?"

Palma looked up in questioning surprise.

"I will explain, my dear madam. The O'Melaghlin's have been The O'Melaghlin's from time immemorial, as I had the honor to tell you before. They were monarchs of Meath for many centuries; but they were never 'mister,' like any ordinary Smith, Jones, or Brown, or Anybody. So, my fair kinswoman, you will please to oblige me by dropping that little prefix to my old historic name."

"Bnt, Mr.—I beg pardon. But, sir, if I must not call you 'mister,' how shall I address you or speak of you?" inquired the bewildered young woman.

"Simply as O'Melaghlin, or The O'Melaghlin. My dear, how would you speak of or address Julius Cæsar, Marc Antony, or Alexander the Great? Would you say 'Mr.' Julius Cæsar? 'Mr.' Marc Antony? No, you would not. And no more should you say Mr. O'Melaghlin. There are family names, my dear lady, that outrank not only the little prefix of 'mister,' but all titles, and such a name is that of The O'Melaghlin." solemnly concluded the chieftain.

"Very well, O'Melaghlin," laughed Palma. "I will hereafter always remember to call you O'Melaghlin, though, indeed, it will make me feel like a very fast young woman, and just as if I had a jockey cap on my head and a cigar in my mouth."

"I wish to be enlightened," said Stuart, with a smile. "You call me 'Wolfscliff.' Why, upon the same principle, do you not call yourself Arghalee?"

The chieftain drew himself up with a royal air and replied majestically:

"Because, sir, The O'Melaghlin ranks the territorial title of Arghalee, as it ranks every other title!"

"Does not the royal name of Stuart rank Wolfscliff?"

"It would; but there are thousands of Stuarts, and you are only one of them, and derive your individual distinction from your manor. You are Stuart, of Wolfscliff. There is but one O'Melaghlin. I am The O'Melaghlin."

"And your son?"

"He is Michael O'Melaghlin. When he succeeds me he will be The O'Melaghlin."

"I see!" said Stuart, with a smile.

But I doubt if he did see.

CHAPTER XXXV

AN ANGEL'S WORK

THE next day Palma had a final and decisive talk with Mrs. Pole.

In such high esteem was this good woman held by the young Stuarts that they regarded her almost as a mother.

When the question of going to England that summer was first mooted, the alternative was placed before Mrs. Pole, and the choice given her to accompany the young pair on their voyage and foreign tour or to remain at Wolfsciff in charge of the house.

And the woman, on her part, had entreated Mr. and Mrs. Stuart to tell her which they would prefer to have her do.

To which they replied that they wished her to do just as she pleased.

This morning Palma came into the nursery, where Mrs. Pole sat beside the cradle, watching the sleeping babies, while she sewed on some plain needlework.

Now for the last fortnight Mrs. Pole had been halting between two opinions, divided between the affections for Cleve and Palma and their children, that drew to go with them, and her dread of the long voyage and love of quiet that bound her to her home. Therefore, she wished them to make the decision for her that she was incapable of making for herself. And they would not.

But within a day or two it had been "borne in" upon the mind of Poley that, although Mr. and Mrs. Stuart really wished her to do as she pleased in this matter of going or staying, yet that they would be better satisfied that she should please to stay at Wolfsciff to take care of the house than to go to Europe with them. Mrs. Pole and her young friends were really secretly of one mind in this matter.

So when Palma sat down beside her she was prepared to meet the question.

Palma said:

"Poley, dear, it is really time now that you should make up your mind as to what you are going to do about going to Europe with us or staying here. Because, if you should decide to go with us, Poley, dear, we must begin at once

to look out for some good and reliable woman to come and take care of the house while we are away."

"Oh, my dear child, you needn't trouble yourself to look out for nobody. If it is all the same to you, I will myself stay here and look after the place while you are gone. Will that suit you, ma'am?"

"Perfectly, Poley, dear. We would rather leave you in charge of our home than any one else, if you are satisfied to stay."

"Yes, I am, dearie. I'm over elderly to be sailing on the high seas, and nothing but my love for you all would ever a-made me think of such a thing. And now, as I find I can serve you better by staying here than going 'long o' you, why, 'deed, I'd heap liefer stay here."

"Then it is all right, Poley. And now tell me, when did you hear from your niece?"

"Jane Morgan, you mean, ma'am?"

"Of course, Jane Morgan. I did not know you had any other niece."

"No more I hadn't, ma'am. Well, I heard from her 'bout two weeks ago. He have been out of work near all the latter part o' the winter, and they've been a-having of a very hard time, ma'am, and that is a fact, with all the mouves they've got to feed, too."

"How many children have they, Poley?"

"Six, ma'am. The oldest nine years old, and the youngest nine months. And he out of work so long, poor fellow!"

"You should have told me, Poley."

"What for, ma'am? You couldn't have helped it. I sent 'em a good part of my wages, and that kept 'em a-going."

"Poley, do you remember that I told you your niece should come here and bring all her babies this summer to see you and to get the benefit of this pure mountain air?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, indeed I do remember!" exclaimed Mrs. Pole, brightening up.

"And have you written to your niece about it?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. As you never mentioned the subject again after that first time, I didn't know but what you had forgotten it or changed your mind."

"Oh, Poley! How could you? Well, now, look here. Write to your niece and tell her to come and bring all her children down here to spend the summer with you while we

are gone to Europe. And I hope they will come, Poley. It would do the little children so much good. And, oh! is Mr. Morgan out of work now, Poley?"

"He was two weeks ago, ma'am, with no prospect of getting any."

"What is his trade?"

"He is a carpenter and builder, ma'am?"

"Oh, then I do think we shall be able to do a good thing for him. Such a good thing for him!" exclaimed Palma.

Mrs. Pole looked up in mute surprise and inquiry.

"Why, this is it. You know there is ever so much carpenter's work wanting to be done on the place. I have heard Cleve talking about it. The barn is to be almost rebuilt, and the house here wants repairs. Cleve thought of getting a carpenter down from Staunton. But now, you see, I shall just ask him to send for Mr. Morgan. And then they can all come down here—husband, wife and children! Won't that be glorious, Poley? And he will not lose his time, and they will not be under expenses!" cried Palma in delight.

"That will be very fine indeed, ma'am, if so be it can be managed," replied Mrs. Pole.

And then she began to compute how much it would cost to bring Joseph and Jane Morgan and their family from New York to West Virginia, and to count up her own savings from her wages.

"I can do it," she said to herself. "I can do it! And they can pay me afterward as they get on, and if they don't they needn't bother about it."

Palma went straight to Cleve and unfolded her views.

"You see, dear," she said, after she had duly introduced the subject, "I did give Poley leave to ask her niece and the children to come down here and stay with her while we should be away in Europe; for, oh! only think how much good it will do those poor little children! And now since the husband and father is a carpenter and a skilled workman, as Poley says he is, what could happen better for all parties? You can engage him to do the work here that is so much wanted. And it will be such a good thing for him and his family as well as for us."

"My dear quixotic Palma, your benevolence carries you into wild extravagance, I fear," said Stuart, with a smile.

"I was only thinking of the poor man—a skilled me-

chanic, too, out of employment—and of his poor, overtaxed wife and their poor little children. I know it is an unusual thing to do to bring down a whole family when one only wants a carpenter. But then, you see, the circumstances are also unusual, and——”

“And the little woman who plans the arrangements is not only unusual, but—phenomenal!” Stuart said, interrupting her, with a smile.

“Oh, Cleve, listen to me, dear, and be serious, for I am. I said the circumstances were unusual, and so they are. We are going to Europe, and this old house among the hills would be nearly empty while we are gone, and Mrs. Pole would be alone except for the negro servants on the place unless we should let her have some one to stay with her. Now these people are her nearest relations. I promised her that they should come and visit her. They are in bitter want of all that the change would bring them—and, oh, dear me, Cleve!” she suddenly broke off, “we are not living in this world all for ourselves! And don’t you think it would be a sin, and we should be worse than the dog in the manger to leave this big old house among the hills almost empty when we go away instead of opening it to that poor, half-starved and half-stifled tenement family whose children would here have fresh air, pure water and good food, and who would get health and strength and delight in this beautiful place?”

“Why, Palma, dear, you talk to me as if I had to be argued into consenting to this arrangement. It is enough, love, that you wish to have it made,” said Stuart.

“That is very kind of you, Cleve; but I wished to convince, not to coax you.”

“A distinction without a difference in this case, dear. Well, I will see to this.”

The only hesitation Stuart felt was as to the character of the man Morgan, of whom neither Palma nor himself knew anything. But Mrs. Pole did know, and Stuart resolved to have a talk with the woman, in whose honesty and judgment he had equal and entire confidence.

Later in the day he questioned Mrs. Pole, and when she assured Mr. Stuart that “he”—she always referred to her nephew-in-law by the pronoun instead of his name—“he” was honest, temperate and industrious as a man could be,

and his only fault was carelessness about saving money when he had it, though he never wasted it on himself, but on the young ones, even to the extravagance of an excursion sometimes. But for that, "he" was as good and trusty a man as ever wore shoe leather.

Upon this information Stuart acted, and wrote a letter to Mr. Morgan offering him work for the summer, with good wages and his expenses paid to West Virginia if he should accept the terms. This business letter inclosed two others, one from Palma to Mrs. Morgan, explaining circumstances and asking her as a favor to come with Mr. Morgan and bring all their children and stay at Wolfsciff with Mrs. Pole for the whole summer and part of the autumn, while Mr. Stuart and she (the writer) should be in Europe. The last letter was from Mrs. Pole to her niece, imploring her not to be "backward" in accepting the lady's invitation, which was made in good faith and in the earnest desire to do them service.

These letters, inclosed in one envelope, were sent off by that day's mail.

Within seven days the answer came. One from Morgan to Mr. Stuart, gratefully accepting the liberal terms offered him; one from Jane Morgan to Mrs. Stuart, overflowing with delight and thankfulness, and telling the lady, what Palma appreciated best of all, that her children were "fairly standing on their heads in delight at the thought of their going into the country," and one from the niece to her aunt, breathing of gratitude to the Giver of all good gifts for this blessing.

Stuart sent on his check to Morgan.

Mrs. Pole began active preparations for the reception of her niece and the children.

The large bedroom on the ground floor which had once been the private apartment of old Mr. Cleve, and two smaller rooms in the rear of that were fitted up for the family.

"Because," said Palma, "these rooms all open upon the back porch and the end porch, and will be so convenient for the little children to run in and out without danger of falling from any height or hurting themselves."

Mrs. Pole was ready to cry with the feeling of the young woman's tender, thoughtful kindness.

Palma was busy also with her own preparations. It was no very easy matter to pack trunks for her husband, her children and herself for a voyage to Europe. It would have been a much harder task but that Cleve continually reminded her that she really needed to take no more than they might require on their voyage.

"To carry clothes to Europe is to 'carry coals to Newcastle,' " he said, quoting an old proverb.

Hatty, to her great delight, was selected from all the other servants to go with them as lady's maid and children's nurse.

The last week of their stay at Wolfsciff came. And the program for that week was all laid out.

On Sunday they all went to church together.

On Monday Mr. and Mrs. Cleve Stuart gave a dinner party at Wolfsciff in honor of their guest, The O'Melaghlin, and for which the invitations had been given out several days previous. This was a great success. All the family connections of the Stuarts and the Cleves were on hand, and The O'Melaghlin was in great force, notwithstanding, or perhaps just because, he had taken a great deal more wine than was good for him. But in this respect he was kept well in countenance by the elders of that dinner table; for up to this time the total abstinence movement had not reached that neighborhood, where the heads of old families kept up the convivial habits of their forefathers.

On Tuesday, by appointment, Mr. Stuart sent the large carryall and also the ox cart to Wolfswalk to meet the Morgans, who were expected to arrive that afternoon.

After their dispatch the whole household of Wolfsciff was in a state of expectancy much more delightful at the anticipation of meeting the poor workman's family of small children who would be in such ecstasies at their visit than they would have been in looking forward to the arrival of the most distinguished party this country could afford.

But it was quite late at night when the two lumbering vehicles drew up before the door.

The O'Melaghlin had retired to rest.

Stuart had remained in the drawing-room under silent protest, until Palma entreated, exhorted and commanded, using all the forms of the potential mood in order to make

him go to bed. Then he laughed and yielded, and Palma and Mrs. Pole "stayed up" to receive the travelers.

They had a nice supper, also, ready for them.

So when they heard the wheels grate on the pebbles before the house both rushed out of the room just in time to see old 'Sias, who alone of all the servants shared their watch, unbolt and unbar the great double front door.

Then the door was opened and the large party filed in.

Palma withdrew to the background to let Mrs. Pole offer the first greetings to her relatives. First came Joe, with one child fast asleep on his shoulder, and another, half asleep, holding his hand by his side.

Then came Jane, with the baby in her arms and two little girls clinging to her skirts, and the eldest boy close behind her.

Mrs. Pole received them one by one, kissing them in tears of joy, and with disconnected, inarticulate words of welcome.

In the midst of this little hubbub the carryall and ox cart were heard to start again and roll away in the direction of the barnyard.

Mrs. Pole presented them all, one by one, to Palma, who received each with great kindness, and took the baby to hold in her arms, while its mother, father and all the other children followed Mrs. Pole into the bedrooms to take off their wraps and wash for supper.

Then came the comfortable supper and the chat that accompanied it.

Palma felt fully compensated for her "quixotism."

When they all bade her good-night and went to their rooms on the ground floor Palma felt too joyful to retire; so she stayed up talking to Mrs. Pole until midnight, and then—even then—when she retired to bed, she was too happy to sleep—too happy in the thought of the happiness she witnessed.

The next morning must have reconciled a more hard-headed man than Cleve Stuart to the quixotism of his wife.

The lawn resounded with the shouts and laughter of the little children, who might have thought, if young children ever think, that they had died in their tenement house and waked up in heaven.

Stuart was as much pleased with the frank, honest face

and manner of Joseph Morgan as Palma was with the true, tender, motherly countenance and conversation of Jane Morgan.

On Thursday morning the Stuarts, with The O'Melaghlin and their servants, started for New York, en route for England.

They reached the city on Friday morning.

They spent the day in making calls on the Wallings and other friends.

On Saturday the whole party sailed for Liverpool.

CHAPTER XXXVI

GENTLEMAN GEFF'S FATE

GENTLEMAN GEFF was in a profound stupor when he was taken to the rectory and put to bed in the best chamber of the house—the parlor bedroom on the ground floor.

He continued in this state for several days, faithfully watched by Elspeth and Longman, and frequently visited by Mr. and Mrs. Campbell, and daily attended by Dr. Hobbs.

Jennie shrank from even going to look at him.

But he recognized no one, noticed nothing.

Medicine and highly concentrated nourishment were regularly administered to him by his nurses.

These he sometimes swallowed instinctively, mechanically, and at other times choked over, and had to be raised in bed and have his throat relieved and his mouth wiped like a helpless baby; but all unconsciously on his part. He never knew, or seemed to know, what he himself was suffering, or other people were doing.

His spirit was away, away.

Where?

In Hades, most probably, judging from his antecedents.

"Will he die in this stupor, or come out of it, do you think, sir?" inquired the rector of the doctor one morning as the two men stood by the bedside of the patient.

Dr. Hobbs never "shook his head;" doctors never do

such stupidly disheartening things over a case, however serious—story writers to the contrary notwithstanding.

This physician also had the courage to confess that he was not omniscient, for he answered:

"I do not know."

"But if he should come out of this stupor, will he be likely to live?" inquired the rector.

"I do not know," again replied the doctor. "I shall be better able to judge when he recovers consciousness, if he should ever recover it."

And the physician wrote his prescriptions and instructions for the treatment of the ill man and retired.

Not one word of this talk entered the consciousness of Gentleman Geff.

Nine days he lay in this condition, and then there passed over him a change.

He seemed to himself to be groping feebly out of nothingness into vague consciousness of horror; but what the horror was, or what he himself was, he did not even think. The first effort to do so sent him back into the state from which he had come.

After a few hours he came again out of utter oblivion into some faint consciousness of himself.

But who was he? Where was he?

All was dark and still around him. Then came faint intelligence, with imperfect memory, which mingled dreams with distorted facts. He remembered faintly what he would have called "a row," but where, or under what circumstances, he could not find; he thought it was a drunken brawl over cards in a gambling saloon, and some one had crushed in his brain and killed him.

Yes, that was it! He had been killed last night in a drunken brawl over cards, in a gambling saloon, and now he had come to life——

Where?

In that dark lower world, without sun, moon or stars; without air, water or vegetation; that world of horror and despair of which he had heard in childhood, but in which he had never believed, and where he must wait with thieves and murderers and miscreants like himself until the general judgment day; and after that——

What?

The eternal life of torture in the lake of fire and brimstone in which he had never believed, either in its literal or in its metaphorical meaning.

And now he was too utterly debilitated in mind and body to know or to feel anything very clearly or deeply.

He relapsed into unconsciousness.

When he came to himself the next time he was able to think with a little more clearness, and to recollect with more correctness.

He remembered now that it was at Haymore Hall the "row" had occurred, in which he still believed he had been knocked down and had succumbed to his injuries, and had now waked up in the world of darkness, horror and despair, to wait for his final doom.

His final doom?

He moaned in his helplessness, not altogether from fear of future hell, but from a feeling of present thirst, intolerable even as the rich man suffered when he cried to Father Abraham to send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool his parched tongue.

When he had moaned a second time he felt the approach of some huge, dark form. It stood by him, it bent over him, put out a strong arm under his shoulders and lifted him, and placed a glassful of a refreshing beverage to his lips.

He drank and breathed more freely.

Ah! how delicious it was!

The attendant replaced his head on the pillow, smoothed his bedclothes and withdrew to take away the glass.

In a moment he came back, bent over the still half-comatose man and inquired softly:

"How do you feel, Capt. Montgomery?"

"I—I—I—feel——" muttered Gentleman Geff, and then swooned into the slumber of weakness.

Some one silently opened the door and came in. It was the rector.

"How is your patient, Longman?" he inquired.

"Sir, he has just swallowed more liquid than he has since he has been ill; and he has spoken for the first time," replied the nurse.

"Coherently?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did he say?"

"Well, not much. I asked him how he felt, as an experiment, you see, sir, and to find out whether he could understand anything; and he did understand, for he began to tell me, and he dropped off to sleep. You see he is sleeping naturally, sir."

"Yes, I see. Well, Longman, it is one o'clock. Go to bed. I will relieve your watch," said the rector, sinking into the large easy-chair beside the patient.

Longman made some resistance to this proposal, but Mr. Campbell was firm, and sent off the wearied nurse to take his much needed rest.

The ill man rested well for some hours, and then moaned in his sleep.

The watcher gave him a cooling and strengthening beverage, just as Longman had done, and the patient sank again into sleep, muttering:

"I can't be in hell, after all, for in hell no one comes from heaven to put a cool——" Then his words became inaudible until he dropped into unconsciousness with the last word—"purgatory"—on his failing tongue.

All the remainder of the night he slept well, only occasionally muttering in his sleep:

"Not in hell, after all—only in purgatory—not such a bad place."

In the morning when the doctor came to make his daily visit he found the ill man sleeping quietly and Mr. Campbell and Longman sitting by his bed.

He examined the patient's pulse and temperature without waking him, and then took the two watchers' report.

"Took nourishment with a relish and spoke consciously—both good signs, excellent signs! but I can say no more at present."

The doctor wrote out the formulas for the day and took leave.

All that day Gentleman Geff remained in the same condition without a sign of further improvement. All the following night Longman had a repetition of the experience of the preceding night. At dawn his mother, Elspeth, relieved him and sent him to bed.

After the family breakfast Mr. Campbell came in and sent Elspeth out to get her own coffee and muffins. The sick-room was still kept very dark by the doctor's orders.

Darkness, he said, was the best sedative for nerves and brain in the condition of Capt. Montgomery.

When the sick man showed by moaning and moving uneasily that he was awake, the rector took some beef tea that was kept hot over a spirit lamp, poured it into an invalid's feeding-glass and administered it to the patient.

Gentleman Geff sucked it in with a relish, and then sank back on his pillow with a sigh of satisfaction.

When Mr. Campbell had put away the cup and returned to his seat by the bedside he was startled by hearing the patient inquire:

"Who the devil are you, I wonder?"

He answered calmly, however:

"One whom you should know, Capt. Montgomery. I am James Campbell, rector of——"

But he was interrupted by an exclamation from Gentleman Geff.

"The devil you say! The curate of Medge in purgatory! a parson in purgatory! When did your reverence die?"

The rector paused a few moments before he replied, and then he spoke very quietly:

"I am not dead, nor likely to die; nor are you in purgatory as you seem to think."

"What! are you living?"

"Yes, I thank Heaven."

"And—I living also?"

"Yes! And I say thank Heaven for you also."

"Where are we, then?" questioned the man in a quavering voice.

But before the rector could answer his question, and even while the question was on his lips, Gentleman Geff had fainted into forgetfulness.

In his struggling soul, striving back to consciousness from his long stupor, the wretched man had been the victim of three several hallucinations.

First, that he was dead and buried, and while in that state he made no sign.

Second, that he was in hell, and then his wail for water and the drink that was given him dispelled the illusion, which was replaced by the fancy that he was in purgatory.

Now the meeting with the living James Campbell had

cured him of that delusion also, and left him to one more natural but not the less painful.

When next he awoke from temporary oblivion his brain was clearer and his memory more accurate than either had yet been since his illness; still, both were somewhat clouded, so that they mixed up time and space, and dreams and realities in weird phantasmagoria.

For instance, he remembered every detail of the two murders he thought he had committed, but not an item of the meeting with his two intended victims living to accuse him, not of murder, but of attempted murder.

And without reflecting, or being now able to reflect, that he could not possibly be hung in England for murders committed in America, he now thought that he was in the condemned cell of an English prison, waiting for speedy execution; that the huge giant who loomed through the shadows of the prison was his death watch, and that James Campbell had come to him in his clerical capacity to prepare him for death.

"But I will not allow him to worm any confession out of me. I have been convicted on the frailest circumstantial evidence, and they dare not hang me at the last. I will have nothing to do with the parson. I won't even know him."

This was the most coherent thought that Gentleman Geff had formed since he sank into stupor in the drawing-room of Haymore Hall. But the instinct of self-preservation is a wonderful stimulant to the brain.

So when James Campbell came next to him he turned his face to the wall and would not notice him.

When Longman came and gave him food and asked how he felt he answered:

"I want to see my lawyer. Send him here."

Longman, who had been directed to humor all his whims, replied:

"Very well, sir. He shall be summoned immediately."

"And don't let that parson come near me again. I hate parsons. And if he thinks he is going to nag me into confessing crimes I never even dreamed of committing he must be a much bigger fool than ever I took him to be. Send my lawyer to me, do you hear?"

"All right, sir."

"Well, then, why the devil don't you do it? You needn't keep such an infernal sharp lookout on me. I am not going to commit suicide, I tell you."

Longman laughed and left the room.

Gentleman Geff turned with his face to the wall and tried to remember the details of his supposed trial—what the lawyers had said, what "his honor" said, how he, the prisoner at the bar, had behaved; and then, failing to remember anything of what had never occurred, his diseased brain took to imagining a whole drama, in which he formed the central figure.

The doctor came in the same morning, felt his pulse and asked him how he had slept.

"None the better for you and your quackeries," was the reply. "And if I am supposed to be sick enough to have a physician, why the devil am I not sent to a hospital, and not kept in this wretched hole?" he added, still believing himself to be in the condemned cell of the Chuxton jail.

"Why, don't they treat you well here?" pleasantly inquired Dr. Hobbs.

But Gentleman Geff disdained to reply and turned his face to the wall.

The doctor rose to take leave.

"I think the man is getting along very well; much better than I ever thought that he would."

"I think he is an ungrateful beast!" exclaimed Longman.

"Oh, you must not judge him harshly. His head is not clear yet. He does not know friends from foes," replied the doctor, who knew nothing whatever of Gentleman Geff's criminal career, so well had the secret been kept by those who possessed it.

Longman did not answer in words; but his grim silence was sufficiently expressive.

"And now you may let a little more light in the room and give him a more varied diet," was the parting instruction of the physician.

As soon as the latter had gone and the door closed behind him Longman returned to the bedside of his charge.

Gentleman Geff was sleeping, or seemed to be so.

Longman went and opened the shutters of one window, but drew down the white linen shade and let fall the white

lace curtains. This filled the chamber with a soft, subdued light.

Longman was getting to be an experienced nurse, and knew that it would not be well to startle the patient, who had lived so long in shadows, with too bright a light.

When he had arranged the room to his satisfaction he resumed his seat at the bedside, and fell into the reflection that, notwithstanding all the unbelief and hardness of heart that degrade this age of the world, there were still some good Christian people who lived by the golden rule.

In the midst of these reflections he was startled by seeing Gentleman Geff turn over to the front of the bed and stare out through the opening of his festooned white curtains. His eyes took in the soft, dim outlines of a moonlight-looking room, though it was now really midday, and the white window shade and the white lace curtains produced the lunar effect.

By this soft effulgence he saw that the room was very spacious, and had four lace-curtained windows, and a lovely lace-draped dressing-table, soft, white, dimity-covered chairs and sofa, and pretty Turkey rugs upon a polished yellow oak floor.

The richly carved marble mantelpiece, with its large mirror, Sèvres vases and terra cotta statuettes, and the polished steel stove, with its glowing but flameless fire of hard coal, was hidden from his sight by a tall Japan screen.

Everything in the apartment bespoke wealth, culture and luxury.

Gentleman Geff stared until his eyes stood out from their sockets. Then he muttered to himself:

"This is not a prison cell, nor yet any hospital ward; yet this man sitting here must be the same Giant Despair who was with me in jail. There can't be two of that size in the same country."

Longman stood up and stooped over him, saying:

"Can I do anything for you, Capt. Montgomery?"

"Oh, it is you! I thought there couldn't be two of you in the same century, on the same planet."

"What can I do for you, sir?"

"Confound you! you can explain things, I suppose. You can tell me where the devil I am now!"

"You are at the rectory of Haymore parish, sir, where

you were brought on the night of that unfortunate"—Longman paused a moment for an inoffensive word, and then added—"disturbance at Haymore Hall."

"Disturbance—at Haymore Hall!" muttered the criminal, growing pale as ashes and sinking back upon his pillow.

No revelation yet had struck him so heavily as this. And it brought back a more exact memory, though not yet a perfect one, of the recent past.

Longman hurried to the other end of the room and returned with a powerful restorative.

He held Gentleman Geff up on his left arm while he put the draught to his lips with his right hand.

The criminal drained the last drop, and then sank down upon his pillow, while Longman withdrew his arm and replaced the empty glass.

Gentleman Geff did not speak again.

He was possessed of a fear of talking, lest he should "commit" himself.

But he now reflected the more, though his deductions were still confused.

"No wonder I could not remember the details of my trial—a trial that never occurred, but was only a dream of fever. But all the same, if it has not yet come off, it is to come, unless I go!"

He laughed a little to himself at this poor joke, and then he tried to recall the incidents of that "disturbance" at Haymore Hall.

But he could not think consecutively for many minutes before his thoughts became entangled, and dreams were mingled with realities, and false inferences deduced from the union.

"I remember now," he said to himself, "something about that row at Haymore Hall, though my illness must have made some things seem vague to me on first recovering my senses. But I remember now!"

Even as he spoke the words and tried to marshal the facts in their proper sequence, memory and imagination fled, and left his mind a vacuum again.

Some hours later, after Longman had given him a bowl of strong beef tea and a glass of fine old port wine, his mental faculties rallied again, though feebly, and he

thought he could form a correct theory; he would not try to get help in doing this by asking any question. He was too much afraid of compromising himself in some way.

"I do recall now," he told himself, "the cause of that row at Haymore Hall. Let me see——"

"I had just arrived with my wife and my brother-in-law at Haymore, to take possession, when I was met by officers with a warrant for my arrest on the charge of murder——"

"How was that, now? Let's see—oh, yes! I was arrested upon a warrant, issued under the extradition treaty with the United States, charged with the murder of Randolph Hay in California, and of Jennie Montgomery in New York——"

Here the wretched man paused, shuddered and covered his face with his hands. The horror of his crime overcame him, as it had so often done, when it drove him to seek oblivion in strong drink, and finally made him a drunkard.

It was some time before he could resume his line of thought.

"I know," he mused at length, "that I denied the charge and resisted the arrest, and that there was a fight. One of the officers clubbed me—on the head—and I fell like an ox, and knew no more. When I came to myself I was lying here."

He paused again, and seemed to labor to understand his present position.

"How came I to be here?" he inquired of himself; and after a few minutes exclaimed:

"Oh, I know! I see it all now! I had given the living of Haymore to my brother-in-law, Cassius Leegh—the scoundrel! When I was brained by the club of that constable, of course I was more a dead than a living man, and in no condition to be carted off ten miles to the Chuxton jail! So I was placed under arrest and brought here in charge of constables. And here I am in my brother-in-law's rectory, guarded by officers, and particularly by that Giant Gerion, who never leaves me, night or day—set fire to him!"

Gentleman Geff moaned and groaned and tossed until Longman brought him a glass of milk punch, which seemed to soothe him.

Then he resumed his self-communings:

"I wonder, since I am in his rectory, which was also my gift to him, why I never see Cassius Leegh? And I wonder where his sister, my bogus wife, is? And, more than all, I wonder now—what brings James Campbell here?"

He paused in distress, and then moaned to himself:

"I give it up! I give it up! It is all past me! 'Chaos has come again.' But one thing is clear, even in chaos—that is, I must escape from this house. I must not wait to be taken to jail, as I should be as soon as the doctor has pronounced me well enough to be removed."

He thought as intensely as he was capable of thinking, and then suddenly formed a plan.

"I will not get well enough to be removed while I stay here, and I will escape from the house at the first opportunity."

From this day the patient became a puzzle to his physician as well as to his attendants. He did not seem to gain in strength, but to grow weaker and more helpless every day; notwithstanding that his appetite was good. At night he was restless and delirious.

"I confess that this case perplexes me," Dr. Hobbs admitted to Mr. Campbell.

But the case grew out of a misunderstanding between the patient and his attendants.

Gentleman Geff, not quite in his right mind yet, believed himself to be under arrest with the prospect of a prison, a trial and conviction before him; whereas there was no intention on any one's part of even making an accusation against him.

His physician and watchers, not knowing the delusion under which he silently and fearfully suffered, could not suspect him of playing a part to prolong his sojourn at the rectory and postpone his transfer to the prison.

This state of things continued for a week. There had been in this time two opportunities for Gentleman Geff to escape—for, after all, he was not watched as a criminal, but only as an invalid. There had been two occasions on which he had been left alone for an hour or two; but on both these the weather had been terrific with wind, snow and sleet, and he waited for weather and opportunity both to favor him together.

But one morning, after he had eaten a good breakfast

lain back on his pillow, and pretended to fall into a stupor, as usual, when the doctor was expected, something occurred that frightened him and hurried his operations.

The doctor came, accompanied on this occasion by Mr. Campbell, who did not often intrude his unwelcome presence into the sick-room.

The doctor leaned over the bed and inquired:

"How are you, Capt. Montgomery?"

There was no response.

The doctor then laid his hand gently on the man's shoulder to enforce his attention and inquired:

"How are you, sir?"

Still there was no answer.

Then the doctor examined his pulse, temperature and respiration, and even lifted the eyelids and looked at the eyes.

Then he turned to Mr. Campbell and said:

"I feel like giving up the case. I honestly confess I can make nothing of it. The man's appetite, digestion and assimilation are excellent. His pulse is strong, his temperature normal, his respiration perfect, and yet he seems too weak to leave his bed, and he falls into delirium or stupor day and night."

"Pray do not give up the case, doctor. If there is any one you would like to have called in consultation now——"

The doctor paused.

"Well, yes, sir, there is. Sir Ichabod Ingoldsby, the great authority on the diseases of the brain and nervous system. And to get him from London to the North Riding of Yorkshire would cost at least two hundred pounds, even should his engagements permit him to come."

"Never mind what it costs, we will send for him. The young squire has specially enjoined me to spare no expense, as he insists on footing all the bills. Give me Sir Ichabod Ingoldsby's address. I will telegraph him at once. If his engagements will permit he may be here this afternoon."

"Scarcely this afternoon. He will have to make arrangements. Besides, he always travels in the middle of the night to save time. If all should go well we may see him tomorrow morning. Here is his address," said Dr. Hobbs, and he tore a leaf from his tablets and handed it to the doctor. Then both gentlemen left the room.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A FLIGHT FOR FREEDOM

GENTLEMAN GEFF had heard every word spoken by the doctor and the rector. He dared not wait the inspection of the skilled London specialist, the great court physician, who would be sure to detect the deception so successfully imposed upon the simple country practitioner.

The eminent Sir Ichabod Ingoldsby might arrive the next morning. Then he—Montgomery—must escape this very day or night, let the weather be what it might. Any risk rather than the certainty of detection and of all the horrors that must follow.

And the weather was simply awful—"Ragnarok"—"the darkness of the gods." The snow had fallen all the preceding night and all that day. Although there were four windows in the sick-room, and all the shutters were open, yet such was the obscurity that the lamps had been lighted.

Gentleman Geff was not alone until evening, when Longman, having served an excellent supper to his charge and left the latter comfortably laid back on his pillow, in what the nurse supposed to be a safe and sound sleep, withdrew from the room to take his meal and refresh himself by a walk up and down the covered front piazza, and no one took the watcher's place.

This was Gentleman Geff's golden opportunity, not to be lost.

He got out of bed on tiptoes and went and bolted the door.

Then he went to the closet to search for clothes to put on, if perchance he might find any.

He found his own suit that had been taken off him on the night he was brought to the rectory and put to bed, and in the pocket of his coat his *portemonnaie*, well filled as it had been.

They were all there, even to his boots, his socks, his ulster and his hat. He began to dress himself in great haste, but suddenly grew very tired, for though not nearly so weak as he pretended to be, he was not strong.

He went to the buffet, where he knew Longman kept his

wine and medicine, and found a bottle of good old port. He unstopped it, put the mouth to his lips and took a long draught, then a deep breath and another long draught, repeated the process, and—thought he would take the bottle along with him in his flight.

He finished dressing himself without further fatigue, put the bottle of wine in the pocket of his ulster, and went to the window overlooking the back garden of the rectory.

Escape from the room was safe and easy, as this was the parlor chamber on the ground floor of the house.

The window opened, but with a sudden thought he turned back and put out the lights and locked as well as bolted the door. These precautions he thought were necessary to delay the discovery of his flight.

Then he went back to the window and stepped through it, closing it behind him.

Where now?

To the Chuxton railway station and on to London, to lose himself in that great wilderness of human beings until he could take ship to some foreign country with which there was no extradition treaty.

But what a night it was! Dark as pitch but for the spectral light of the snow. The snow was still falling heavily as ever, but the wind had risen in mighty strength and was driving not only the falling but the fallen snow into drifts.

If he had but a lantern! But that was an impossible convenience to him.

He drew the bottle from his pocket, took another long draught from it, replaced it, and set out through "night and storm and darkness" and bitterest cold on his flight for life.

More by instinct or accident than by light and knowledge he found his way around the back wall of the rectory garden to that country road which ran in front of the church, the rectory and Haymore Park, and crossed the highroad at about a mile distant.

The snow fell thicker and faster, the wind rose higher and stronger, and the night grew colder and darker.

He plunged onward through the deepening snow, sometimes almost smothered in the drifts, and requiring all the strength he could muster to struggle out of them.

He lost his way, as it was inevitable he should. Even had it been day, instead of the darkest night that ever fell

upon the earth, the highroad could not have been distinguished from the meadows except by certain tall landmarks. Now it was impossible to distinguish it.

Gentleman Geff knew that he had lost his way, had hopelessly lost it, yet he floundered on through the black chaos on the chance of coming to some place where he could find shelter from the bitter cold, the beating wind, the bottomless drifts and the tempest of driving snow that seemed to be turned to a shower of ice spikes and stung like the sting of wasps.

On and on he floundered and struggled, not daring to stop, for to stop would be to die.

Again and again he applied himself to his bottle until it was empty. Then he let it fall, for indeed his numbed hands could scarcely hold it.

He grew weaker and weaker; his limbs seemed too heavy to lift, especially through deep snow; his brain grew dizzy, his mind confused. He tried to keep his senses and his feet; he felt that if he sank to the ground it must be into his grave.

At length the crisis came; his brain reeled, his limbs gave way, he lost consciousness and fell to the earth.

Meanwhile, at the rectory, Longman took his supper with his mother in their warm, bright sitting-room adjoining the kitchen, everything around them looking so much more comfortable in contrast to the storm raging without.

"I pity any poor wayfarer abroad to-night," said Elspeth as she took the steaming coffee pot from the hob of the glowing grate and set it on the table, little guessing that the poor wretch they had been taking care of for two months was just setting out to brave it at its worst.

"Oh, this is bad enough, but it is nothing at all to the awful storms among the Sierra Nevadas," said Longman as he sat down to the table and took the cup of coffee his mother had poured out for him.

And on her expressing her surprise and wonder, he began to entertain her with marrow-freezing stories of overwhelmed trains of emigrant wagons and buried villages of settlers among the snow mountains.

This delayed him at the supper table so much longer than usual that he had but little time to take his "constitutional" on the covered front piazza.

So after a turn or two up and down he went into the house and up to the door of the sick-room.

He turned the knob and pushed the door, but found it was locked within.

"What whim is this, I wonder?" he said. "I hope the London doctor will order the beast to an idiot asylum. I suppose they wouldn't take him in with the apes at the Zoo. Captain! Capt. Montgomery!" he exclaimed, rapping loudly.

Not a sound from within.

Then he went around to the back piazza and looked through the windows.

All as dark as pitch in the room.

"What's up now, I wonder?" he asked himself, and then went back to the door and tried once more by rapping and calling to bring some response from the room.

But now the noise reached the rector, who was seated at his desk in his study writing his sermon.

He laid down his pen and came into the hall, where he found Longman still hammering and calling.

"What is the matter now, Longman?" inquired the rector.

"This door is fastened from within, sir, and I can neither get into the room nor make him hear me," replied the man.

Of course, unreasonable as it was to try the experiment in which the giant had failed, the rector said:

"Let me try!"

Longman gave way.

The rector rapped a little cannonade upon the door and shouted:

"Capt. Montgomery!"

He might as well have shouted:

"Jupiter Tonnerres!" to the snowstorm for any good effect.

"Shall I burst the door open, sir?" inquired Longman.

"No."

"I wonder what the fellow is up to now!" said Longman.

"Heaven knows!" sighed the rector.

"Will I break the door open, sir?" again asked Longman.

"No, you may bring me a common table knife with the thinnest blade you can find, and come with me to the back piazza."

They left the door, and a few minutes later met under the very window by which the fugitive had made his escape, after re-closing the shutters that fastened with a spring catch behind him.

"Now with this knife I know how to loosen the catches," said the rector; and he laid the blade of the knife flat on the stone sill, slipped it under the catch, and so opened the shutters. Then he slipped the knife between the upper and lower sash of the window and turned the button and so raised the sash.

"That is a very badly secured window in case of burglars," remarked Longman.

"Yes, but you see there are no burglars around Haymore. However, I do intend to have a bolt put on these shutters," said the rector, and he stepped through the window into the room, closely followed by Longman.

All was dark as pitch but for the dull glow of the coal fire in the grate.

They knew it was utterly useless to call, yet both at the same moment cried out:

"Capt. Montgomery! Where are you?"

No answer came.

Longman took a match from the safe on the mantelpiece, kindled it at the fire and lighted the astral.

The room was illuminated in an instant, and every nook and cranny clearly visible. Yet no sign of the missing man. Longman hastened to the bed, from which he drew the curtains. It was vacant.

"He has run away, sir. The fraud, who pretended to be so helpless that he couldn't hold a glass to his lips, has been playing it on us all this time, as I suspected him of doing all along, and now he has run away!" said Longman.

"Oh, I think not. Why should he deceive us? Why should he run off? No one was going to harm him," said the rector, still peering around the room as if he expected to find Gentleman Geff in some nook or corner.

"He mightn't have felt so sure of that, sir. A guilty conscience, you know."

"I cannot think but what he has gone off in a fit of violent mania."

"Then, in that case, he would have gone in his night clothes, just as he jumped out of bed; but here are the

empty shelves and pegs, with every article of his wearing apparel gone," said Longman, coming out of the closet which he had been examining. "And why should he take pains to lock and bolt the door, and put out the light so as to retard the discovery of his flight as long as possible?"

"Oh, I don't know. Lunatics are well known to be very cunning. But, Longman, he must be instantly followed and found, if possible. Oh, heavens! Think of the man being out on such a night as this! He will surely perish," said the rector. And he hurriedly unfastened the door, rushed out into the passage, took his storm cloak from the rack and his hat from its peg, and while he nervously prepared himself to brave the tempest he called out again to the hunter:

"Longman! For Heaven's sake get on your coat and find a lantern and come with me. There is no one but you and me to go in search of this wretched man, whom we must not leave to perish in the snow."

Almost as soon as the rector had ceased to speak, Longman was by his side, prepared for the expedition.

"He must have escaped by that back window, which is the only one that will close with springs. We must search the road leading for the back gate of the garden. Come," said the rector, going before with the lighted lantern, which he had taken from the hand of Longman.

They issued through the rear door, passed through the garden and out of the rear gate.

Holding the lantern near the ground the rector moved slowly and carefully through the white chaos.

The searchers had not groped many yards from the rectory gate when Mr. Campbell saw something black upon the white ground.

He stooped to examine it, and cried out:

"Here he is, Longman; but whether dear or alive, poor wretch, I do not know. Come and help me to lift him."

"He has not been lying here five minutes, or he would be covered with snow. So he may not be dead."

Yes, they had found the body of Gentleman Geff within fifty yards of the rectory wall.

Through the dark night and blinding snow and distracting wind he had lost his reckoning and wandered in a circle until he had fallen down where they found him.

They lifted him up and bore him into the rectory to his own room, undressed him, wrapped him in blankets, and put him to bed.

He was in the deep sleep that precedes death by freezing. He only partially awoke while they were working over him; but he did not speak.

They gave him warm spiced brandy and water, which he swallowed mechanically.

All night long they watched and worked over him.

In the morning, when James Campbell left the sick-room to make his toilet before going to breakfast, he left Gentleman Geff in what seemed a good sleep.

But, while he sat at table explaining to his wife and daughter why he had been out of his room all night, Longman suddenly burst in upon them and said:

"Come in, for Heaven's sake! He is taken with a hemorrhage that I think will carry him off!"

"Longman, run and fetch Dr. Hobbs. Mrs. Campbell and myself will attend to Montgomery."

The hunter fled out of the front door to fetch the physician, while Mr. and Mrs. Campbell rushed to the help of the sufferer.

It was an appalling spectacle!

The blood driven by the freezing cold to the lungs had congested there, and notwithstanding all the means that had been taken to restore his consciousness and save his life, though these means had been thus far successful, yet the congestion of the lungs had increased until it burst an artery and the hemorrhage followed. It was not fatal all at once, for Mr. and Mrs. Campbell called all their skill and experience into service and succeeded in stopping the flow before the arrival of the doctor.

When the latter came to the bedside of the patient he found him laid back on his bed, as pale as death, as weak as a new-born infant, and scarcely breathing, his pulse scarcely beating.

Dr. Hobbs approved all the rector had done, and then inquired:

"Did you get an answer from Sir Ichabod Ingoldsby?"

"Yes, by telegram. He cannot leave London at this crisis."

"Well, it does not matter now. This is a case that any

country doctor or any old woman might understand and treat."

"What do you think of his chance of life?" whispered the rector.

"It is a poorer one than he has yet had," replied the doctor, looking at the pallid, wizened face, that seemed to have shrunk to half its size since his terrible loss of blood.

Hetty cried for pity.

"If he has any relatives they should be informed, for I do not think he will ever rise from that bed again," said Dr. Hobbs.

"I know of none, except the Earl of Engelmeed and the Viscount Stoops—his uncle and his cousin. I will write to the earl to-day," said Mr. Campbell.

"Engelmeed, of Engelwode, in Cumberland? That is where typhoid fever is raging so fiercely," remarked Dr. Hobbs.

Here followed some talk of that pestilence, and finally the doctor arose and took his leave, promising to return in the afternoon.

Mr. Campbell wrote to the Earl of Engelmeed, advising him of his nephew's dangerous illness, and posted the letter that forenoon.

Two days later he got a reply, not from the earl, but from the latter's steward, announcing the death of the Viscount Stoops and the extreme illness of Lord Engelmeed, whose death was hourly expected.

Over this letter the rector fell into deep thought.

Then he put on his coat and hat, and taking the letter with him, walked over to Haymore Hall.

He was shown into the library, where he found Ran reading.

"Good-morning, Mr. Hay. Will you let me look at your 'Burke's Peerage' for a moment?"

"Certainly. How do you do, Mr. Campbell? And how is your family—and your patient?" inquired Ran as he arose and shook hands with the rector, and then went to the bookcase and took down the "Peerage."

"The family is well. The invalid very low. I received a letter from the steward of Engelwode this morning, in answer to the one I wrote to the earl, informing me of the

death of the Viscount Stoors and the extreme illness of Lord Engelmeed, whose demise was then hourly expected."

"Indeed! Had they taken the fever?"

"Yes. It was madness for them to remain at Engelwode during its prevalence. It is from hearing of these occurrences that I wish to consult Burke. I think that since the death of Lord Stoors, our wretch, Montgomery, is heir presumptive to the title and estate," said the rector as he took the heavy red volume from the hands of the young squire, laid it on the library table, and sat down to examine it.

Ran resumed his seat.

"It is as I thought. There is no other son. And Kightly Montgomery, as the eldest son of the next brother, the late Gen. Montgomery, is heir presumptive to the earldom, and may even now be Earl of Engelmeed. Think of it!" exclaimed the rector as he closed the book. "Wealth and rank, for which the wretched man periled his soul and fatally wrecked his life to obtain feloniously, now come to him lawfully and honorably, but on his deathbed!"

"Yes, it is terrible. If he had but waited! Now it seems the iron of fate—this useless accession to fortune!" sighed Ran.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

WINDING UP

RAN and Judy had planned to go to London in the spring, to live in retirement and to pursue their studies under private tutors. But as the season opened in all its beauty they became so enchanted with their delightful country home that they could not bear the thought of leaving it.

"Couldn't we have a resident tutor?" inquired Ran with some hesitation as he and Judy were discussing the question one morning, seated on a rustic bench under an old oak tree in their lovely lawn.

"A resident tutor?" repeated Judy dubiously.

"Yes, such as the gentry have for their children."

"For their children," of course, but not for grown peo-

ple; not for themselves. No, Ran, dear, we could not have a resident tutor for you and me. That would set the servants to talking and the neighbors to gossiping; and they would wonder where we had been brought up, perhaps laugh at us, perhaps scorn us. I should not mind it for myself, Ran, but I should mind it a great deal for you."

"That is not the way I feel, Judy, dear, for I do not care a fig what they say of me, but I could not bear to have them criticise you."

"So, you see, Ran, we could not have a resident tutor."

"I suppose we shall have to go and hide ourselves in London to pursue our studies, Judy, dear."

"Yes," said the young woman with a deep sigh, "but mightn't we put off going until winter? Oh, it is so hard to leave this lovely place in the glory of the spring."

"Judy, love, time is passing quickly, and our education is very backward."

"Especially mine," sighed Judy.

"But I tell you what I will do!" exclaimed Ran with sudden inspiration. "I will confide the whole matter to Mr. Campbell, and take counsel with him."

"The very thing! And, oh, Ran!" exclaimed Judy, catching inspiration in her turn, "might he not become our tutor? Give us an hour three or four times a week?"

Ran fell into thought, but did not reply.

"I have so often heard of clergymen taking pupils. Even taking them in their houses. But he need not do that. Could he not come to us or let us go to him a few times every week?"

"I declare, Judy, darling, that is a splendid idea of yours, and I will ask him, and if he should consent to do as we wish, why, then, we need not bother ourselves about going to London to hide ourselves and look for teachers!" exclaimed Ran in delight.

"And then there need be no gossip. No one need know what brings the rector to our library or takes us to his study," concluded Judy.

"I will go and see Mr. Campbell at once," exclaimed Ran, with boyish eagerness, as he sprang up, seized his hat from the ground and set off in a brisk walk for the rectory.

But he met the rector full tilt at the lodge gate, as Mr. Campbell was on his way to make a call at the house.

They both burst out laughing as they came into collision, and the minister took Ran's arm, turned him about and walked with him back to the rustic seat where Judy sat.

She rose to welcome the visitor and to make room for him beside her on the bench.

"Good-morning, ma'am," he said, lifting his hat and taking the offered seat. "We have lovely weather just now. It must be lovely even in London. In fact, there is always delightful weather in London during May, when the season is at its height. Do you leave for town soon?"

"Oh, I hope not. I never, never, never wish to leave for town," said Judy, with a genuine pout.

"I am sure I wish you never would," laughed Mr. Campbell. "But I thought you were daily expecting to start," he added, turning to Ran.

"So we have been; but we have postponed our departure from day to day, from reluctance to leave the country," replied the young man.

"But the height of the season will soon be over. The weather will grow warm and London intolerable. Much as I should desire for my own sake to detain you here, I should advise you not to delay your departure."

"But we don't want to go at all! And we were not going for the sake of the season, anyhow. And it depends on you, Mr. Campbell, whether we go or not!" exclaimed Judy, taking the initiative and breaking right into the midst of the matter.

"On me, Mrs. Hay!" inquired Mr. Campbell, with a puzzled air.

"Ran, tell him!" commanded Judy.

And then Randolph Hay confided to James Campbell the story of his own and Judy's neglected education, and their plans for remedying their defects, and ended by diffidently proposing that the minister should, if he pleased, become the director of their studies.

"I fear that my petition is a most presumptuous one, sir; but I hope and trust that you will not consider it offensive. If so, I pray you to pardon me."

"My young friend, on the contrary, your proposal is both flattering and agreeable. I shall gladly and gratefully undertake the task for which circumstances as well as, I hope, college training, have fitted me."

"I thank you with all my heart, Mr. Campbell. You have made everything smooth and pleasant for us," heartily responded Ran.

Judy caught the minister's hand, pressed it between both hers, and so expressed her gratitude.

Later all the details of the engagement were arranged between the minister and his pupils.

On Ran's pressing entreaty, Mr. Campbell consented to stay and dine with them that day. And it was during his visit that the evening mail brought them foreign letters from Cleve Stuart, with the news of his Uncle John Cleve's death.

"A good man gone to his rest," was the comment of the clergyman.

The news of death—even of the death of a stranger whom we only knew by report—always casts a shadow, for a longer or a shorter time, over the circle into which it is brought.

Bright Judy was the first to smile and dispel the cloud.

"And now, Mr. Campbell, it is so well that you have consented to take pity on us, for under present circumstances we could not leave Haymore," she said.

The minister raised his brows interrogatively.

"Because we must write and ask our friends to come and spend the summer with us here."

"Ah! I understand," said the rector.

"Your patient lingers longer than any of us expected," remarked Ran.

"Yes," replied Mr. Campbell, "his tenacity of life is really wonderful, poor soul!"

And he arose and bade his hosts good-night.

Gentleman Geff lay slowly sinking at the rectory of Haymore.

The cold contracted on that fatal winter night of his attempted flight had settled on his lungs, and in the deeply inflamed condition of the whole system from alcoholism, had fastened with fatal tenacity upon his system.

But with the change in the seat of the disease—which, while it slowly destroyed his lungs, completely relieved his brain—his mental faculties were perfectly restored, with clear recollection of all that had transpired, so that he knew his antecedents and his present surroundings quite as well as our readers do. He knew also that he had no reason to

fear prosecution. His only fear—a secret one—was of death, “and after death the judgment.”

He had not been prosecuted for any of his felonies, which, indeed, were surrounded by such circumstances as admitted of their being ignored rather than compounded.

All the documents by which he had seemed to secure a merely nominal possession of the Haymore estate concerned the name of Randolph Hay, and for all the law or the public knew, or need know, that name had been claimed only by its real owner, the gentleman now in peaceable possession of the Haymore estate, and never by the impostor who had tried to take it.

So there was no legal obligation upon any one to bring a criminal prosecution for fraud and forgery upon the dying malefactor.

And as to his heavier crimes of bigamy, robbery and attempted murder which had been committed in the United States, there was not the least likelihood that his surrender under the extradition treaty would ever be demanded by that government to answer for them before an American tribunal.

All whom he had so deeply injured, or tried to injure, had freely forgiven him—all, that is to say, except Lamia Leegh, who in her bitter humiliation was incapable of forgiving him.

The rector had to strive and pray for grace before he could pardon the man who had wronged his daughter. But after this grace was given, James Campbell spent many hours beside the bed of the dying man, reading to him, praying with him, persuading him to repentance, exhorting him to faith.

Gentleman Geff was despairing, and at times defiant in his despair.

“You needn’t talk to me, Mr. Campbell. I am as the devil made me. As I ‘have sown’ I ‘must reap.’ If there is anything that can give me satisfaction now, it is that, after all, I have no blood on my conscience. Bad as you may think me, I was never cut out for a murderer. No, nor for a drunkard. Circumstances, temptation, opportunity—these make destiny. I took to drink to drown remorse. I was a fool for feeling it. Bah! how can a creature

of destiny be responsible for anything he does? Yet I am glad there is no blood on my hands."

Mr. Campbell had spoken to Jennie, asking her if she could not overcome her repugnance so far as to go in and speak to Montgomery, now that he was in his senses.

But Jennie shuddered, as she replied:

"Papa, he has never even asked to see me, and I am glad he has not. I have forgiven him. Indeed, indeed I have! And I pray for him. Indeed, indeed I do! Not only night and morning, at the regular prayers, but through the day, whenever I think of him, I pray for him earnestly, fervently. I do! But, papa, I cannot even endure the thought of seeing him."

"Then, my child, you have not truly forgiven him. You must pray for yourself, dear—for the gift of the grace of charity," gravely replied the rector.

No, Gentleman Geff had never asked to see his wife or child; never even referred to either. Mr. Campbell was not sure that the man knew they were in the house.

But one morning, when the rector was sitting beside him, Montgomery suddenly said:

"I think it is a confounded shame that a sick man cannot be permitted to see his wife and child."

"But you can be permitted to see them. Do you wish to do so?" gently inquired the minister.

"I should think I did. I have never even set eyes on the boy, and he must be about nine months old by this time."

"Your child is not a boy, but a girl," said the rector.

"Now there! I did not even know the sex of my own child, who is nearly a year old, and has been under the same roof with me for several weeks. And this a Christian household!"

"If you feel equal to the interview, I will go and call my daughter now and ask her to come and bring the little girl."

"No. Let her come alone the first time. One at a time is all I can stand."

James Campbell went down to the back parlor, where he found his wife and daughter seated at their needlework.

Jennie, my darling," he said, gently laying his hand upon her head, "Montgomery has just asked to see you. Will you come to him?"

"Oh, papa! I cannot! I cannot!" she replied, with a shiver.

"Not come to a dying—yes, I must say it," he added, after a painful hesitation—"husband, when he sends for you?"

"He has forfeited that name, papa," very firmly replied the wronged wife.

"But you must forgive him, my child."

"I do forgive him."

"Well, then, you must come with me to him."

"Oh, papa, I cannot! Indeed I cannot!"

"Then you do not forgive him, although he is dying?"

"Is he dying, papa?" she inquired in a pitiful voice.

"Not this moment, my dear. But Dr. Hobbs declares that he cannot live many days in any case, and may not live an hour if another hemorrhage should come on. Will you come with me, my dear?"

"Oh, papa, I cannot!"

"Jennie, how can you be so hard-hearted?" demanded her mother, now entering into the conversation for the first time. "I am ashamed of you, and afraid for you lest you be punished. After the man is dead and gone, and you can never be kind to him again, you will be sorry. Go, at least, and speak to him if you only stay one minute."

"Come, Jennie," said her father.

And then the young woman arose and followed the clergyman to the sick room.

She entered that room under protest; but when she saw the ghastly, death-stricken face, the skeleton hand stretched out to her, the hollow, sunken, unearthly eyes fixed upon her, she uttered a low cry of horror and pity, and sank down on her knees beside the bed, took his hand and dropped her face upon it.

The rector turned and left the room, closing the door after him.

"There, there, don't cry! What is the use? Jennie, I am sorry that I ever hurt you in any way. That is what I wanted to say to you, and that is why I sent for you," he said, speaking in a rather faint and faltering voice.

She did not reply, but sobbed in silence.

"Jennie, did you hear what I said to you?" he inquired.

"Yes, I heard," she sighed.

"Well, I said I was sorry I hurt you. Well, Jennie?" he asked, and then paused as if expecting some definite answer.

"I, too, am sorry that you hurt me, or anybody else, or yourself worse than all, Kightly. I am very sorry, and I pray to the Lord for you daily, almost hourly. Do you pray for yourself, Kightly?"

"No, I don't! What would be the use? 'God is not mocked.'"

"But 'He is full of compassion,' Kightly. He——"

"There, that will do!" said the sick man, interrupting her. "You know nothing about it! Go now. I have said what I sent for you to say to you. Now go, please. I can't stand much of this sort of thing," he muttered in a weak, petulant voice.

"I will come again to you when you want me, Kightly," she said, rising.

"All right. And bring the youngster—but not to-day. There, there—go along with you," said the man, turning his face to the wall and closing his eyes. Jennie left the room.

The next day she took the baby in to see its father.

She sat down in a chair beside the bed, and sat the baby on the top of the bed near its father's head.

And there she watched it.

The man showed but very little interest in his child.

"I thought, of course, it was a boy," he said; "but, poor little devil, it is better that it should be a girl, for I have no money to leave it, but being a girl, it can marry some of these days and live on some other fellow's money. Take it away now, Jennie. I can't stand much of it," he said.

And the mortified young mother took away the dazed and depressed baby and afterward said to her own mamma:

"I never knew Essie to behave so stupidly. You might have thought she was a little idiot."

"Poor baby! The dark room and the haggard man subdued her spirits. It is a wonder she had not cried," replied the grandmother.

"I am very glad she did not—that would have made him worse," said Jennie.

After this the sinking man declined daily.

Jennie spent hours at his bedside, often having the baby with her when he could bear it.

Mrs. Campbell had been a daily visitor and an occasional nurse from the time he was first brought to the house.

Mrs. Longman never left him except for necessary rest and refreshment.

The gamekeeper's cottage was ready for occupancy, but neither the mother nor the son would leave the suffering sinner to take possession of its comforts and emoluments.

And Ran heartily excused them both under the circumstances and paid the man's salary.

Gentleman Geff had never been told of the death of his cousin, the Viscount Stoops. It was thought by his attendants that the news of the decease of a relative that left him, the dying sinner, heir presumptive of an earldom, would be, if not too sorrowful, certainly too startling, too exciting for the safety of an invalid, whose pulse must not be hurried in the slightest degree lest it should bring on a hemorrhage that must carry off the patient.

One day, about this time, Montgomery rallied, and seemed so much better that the doctor allowed him to sit up in bed, propped by pillows.

Mr. Campbell sat by him, reading aloud the morning's paper, when Longman came in bringing a letter, which he placed in the hands of the rector.

It was in a deep, black-bordered envelope, sealed with a broad black seal and directed to

THE REV. JAMES CAMPBELL,
Haymore Rectory,
Haymore, Yorkshire.

"Excuse me!" he said, and stepped quickly to the furthest window lest the sick man should see the herald of death.

He opened and read the letter, which was from Abel Stout, the steward of Engelwode, and was as follows:

"ENGELWODE CASTLE,
"May 28, 187—.

"REV. AND DEAR SIR: It is my painful duty to announce to you the decease of Charles-George-Francis-Henry, tenth earl of Engelmeed, who expired at one-fifteen this A. M., and of the succession of Capt. the Hon. Rightly Montgomery as eleventh earl. I inclose a letter, which I beg you

to be so kind as to hand to his lordship, if my lord is still in your house, or to forward to his address if he should have left, as the presence of his lordship here is imperatively necessary. I have the honor to remain, reverend sir,

“Your obedient servant,
“ABEL STOUT.”

The inclosed letter was superscribed very formally in full title to

The Right Honorable
THE EARL OF ENGELMEED.

James Campbell stared at this superscription and then glanced at the wreck on the bed, who now bore the dignity of an earldom.

He could not hesitate to deliver this letter, however it might affect his patient. He must deliver it! He had no choice.

But what a shock! what a revelation! what a mockery it would now be to him!—to him who had sinned for wealth and rank, who had sold his birthright for a mess of pottage and found the dish—poisoned!

The Earl of Engelmeed was dead. His son and heir-apparent had died before him, and now—their next of kin, their worthless relative, Kightly Montgomery, the penniless adventurer, who had been driven by greed of gold and love of luxury to crime and to death—the sinful, dying Kightly Montgomery, was now master of Engelwode, with a rent roll of twenty thousand pounds a year!

Ah, if he had only been good and true, he would have lived to enjoy the old title and the rich estate—more honors than he could possibly have gained by all his crimes, even though each one of them had been a complete success!

But now, what a cruel mockery of fate!

Mr. Campbell, reflecting on all these matters, felt really sorry for the wretched criminal, to whom the unexpected news of his succession to the earldom, coming to him in his last hours, must truly seem the bitterest irony of fortune.

“You have bad news there,” said the dying man, glancing at the broad, black-edged envelope.

“Yes, I fear so. It comes from Engelwode, in Cumberland, where you have relatives, I think,” replied the rector gravely.

"Oh, yes, relatives!" sneered the new earl, who did not even suspect that he was one.

"A little more than kin, and less than kind."

There is no love lost between us, believe me."

Hearing this, the rector did not consider it necessary to be very cautious in breaking this news. Nevertheless, he said:

"Let me give you your restorative before we say anything more about the letter."

And he arose and poured out the draught, some powerful tonic, compounded of beef, coca and brandy, and administered it. Then he replaced the glass on the table and said:

"The letter is for you, my lord."

"What the devil do you mean?" demanded the new earl.

"Will you take the letter and look at it? Have you light enough? Shall I draw up the shades?"

"No," said the patient, taking the letter and squinting at it. "This is for my uncle, not for me. Though how it should have come here I can't imagine."

"Your lordship's uncle, the late earl, is dead, my lord," quietly replied the rector.

"Dead!"

"Yes."

"Dead! But there is Stoops."

"He died before his father. But read your letter, my lord," said the rector, purposely ringing the changes on the title that he would have too much good taste to bestow on the heir of an earldom under ordinary circumstances, but on this impenitent sinner, on this unpunished felon, on this dying peer, he lavished the honor with unction in the very bitterness of irony.

"Read your letter, my lord."

"I cannot! Oh, this is too terrible!" groaned the dying earl, covering his face with his hands.

Did he mean, or did the rector for one moment believe that he meant, the sudden death of his relatives, so near together, was too terrible?

No, indeed. The man meant, and the rector knew that he meant, to receive this rich and august inheritance just at

the hour of death was indeed "too terrible"—was insupportable.

Poor wretch! he burst into tears and sobbed aloud, dropping back on his pillow and turning his face to the wall.

"Pray try to be calm, my lord. This emotion will do you a mischief," pleaded Mr. Campbell.

"Go and bring my wife and child to me. Let me tell them the news," he exclaimed, and then burst into the most sarcastic peal of laughter the rector thought he had ever heard. He left the room and went to find his daughter, whom he came upon, as usual, seated beside her mother and engaged in needlework over the baby's cradle.

"Come, my dear. Montgomery wants you. Bring the little one along with you. And, Hetty, dear, you had better come also," he said.

Both women looked up anxiously, half expecting that this was their final summons to the sick room; that now "the end of earth" for Kightly Montgomery was at hand.

"Is anything the matter, Jim?" inquired Hetty, while Jennie's eyes asked the same question.

"News of Montgomery's relatives in Cumberland, that is all," replied the rector.

"What news?" demanded Hetty.

"He prefers to announce it in person."

"Dear me! How mysterious we are! Come on, Jennie!" said Mrs. Campbell, taking her husband's arm and leading the way.

Jennie picked up her baby and followed.

They entered the sick room.

The sick man held out his hand to his wife, saying:

"Come here, Jennie, my girl! You are Countess of Engelmeed! Did you know it? And that doll in your arms is Lady Esther Montgomery!—for a few hours only while I draw the breath of life. Afterward you will only be countess dowager, while she will be countess in her own right. For the earldom of Engelmeed is not a male fief exclusively, but failing the male line which fails in me, will 'fall to the distaff,' as represented by that rag baby of yours. So I think—you are com——" He paused in sudden pain and prostration.

"Do not speak again for the present, my lord. You will

hurt yourself. Rest a while," said the rector, while Jennie looked at her mother in helpless dismay.

"He is delirious again, my dear," whispered Mrs. Campbell in reply to that look.

"Stoop down——" muttered the dying man in a low, faint, husky voice.

Jennie bent over him to catch his failing words.

"You will be—compensated—for all—you have gone through—by being made—a countess—you ought——"

His voice suddenly ceased. A spasm of pain traversed his face.

"My lord! my lord! Have mercy on yourself and keep still," pleaded the rector.

It was too late. A wild look flew into the eyes of the dying man and fixed them on the rector's face. A torrent of blood gushed from his mouth. Gentleman Geff had spoken his last words, and in a very few minutes he had drawn his last breath.

Jennie threw herself sobbing into the arms of her father. She was too young to have much self-control, but whether now she wept from grief, horror or compassion, or all three combined, she could not herself have told.

Her father took her babe to his bosom and led her to her own room, where he made her lie down on her bed and placed the child beside her.

The rector went to his study and wrote a letter to the steward at Engelwode, telling him what had happened.

Then he walked over to Haymore Hall to carry the news to Mr. Randolph Hay and to confer with him on what was next to be done.

Ran and Judy were both shocked and grieved at the fate of their enemy—their enemy, however, only in so far as he tried to wrong them primarily with the wish to benefit himself rather than to injure them.

"The remains should be taken to Engelwode Castle and placed in the family vault, of course," said the rector. "And as the last earl died without having had time to make a will between his succession and his death, my granddaughter, the little countess, will be a ward in chancery."

"And no doubt the lord chancellor will constitute you, sir, the guardian of her person and a trustee of her estate," added Ran.

"Perhaps—most likely, indeed; in which case they will associate some other reliable man with me in the onerous charge. And I should like you to be that man, Hay," pleaded the parson.

"With pleasure; if the lord chancellor will appoint me," answered Ran.

"Is Jennie much distressed, sir?" inquired Judy, sympathetically.

"Yes, madam. She is very much agitated."

"May I go to her? Could I do her any good?"

"I feel sure you could. I should feel very grateful to you."

Judy hurried into the house and got her wraps, and came out to join the rector in his walk homeward.

At the rectory door they were met by Mrs. Campbell, who, after very gravely saluting Judy and thanking her for coming, turned to the rector and inquired:

"What was all that the wretched man was rambling about in his last hour? Was there any foundation of truth in it?"

"It was all truth, Hetty, from foundation rock—to carry out your simile—to capping stone; and baby Essie is now Countess of Engelmeed in her own right and a ward in chancery."

"Well, well, well! She doesn't know it—Jennie, I mean, of course. She thinks he was out of his head."

"Yes, I saw she did; but it is true," said the rector, as they entered the house.

A week later the remains of the last Earl of Engelmeed were laid in the vault of his forefathers, amid all

"The pride, pomp and circumstance"

of funeral parade.

After the ceremonies the rector, with his wife, daughter and grandchild, returned to the rectory, where they were all to live during the minority of the infant countess.

Ran and Judy came back to their beloved home, but had scarcely got settled there when they received letters announcing the speedy arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Cleve Stuart, with their children and a friend—Mr. O'Melaghlin, of Arghalee, in Antrim.

"I wonder who he is," pondered Ran, as he took the letter over to the rectory to show it to Mr. Campbell.

"Why, I know the name and the place, but not the man. I have been to Arghalee. All except the very ground on which the ancient castle stands, and which the impoverished O'Melaghlin would not sell under any stress of fortune, forms a part of the duke's estate. The castle is one of the show places of the neighborhood; not for its parks, plantations or picture galleries, by any means—for there are none—but for the great antiquity of the ruins. The owner was supposed to be traveling abroad. He is The O'Melaghlin in question, of course. The guidebook to the ancient castle shows the family to be lineal descendants from Roderick O'Melaghlin, monarch of Meath, and more remotely from Konn, a somewhat mythical king of prehistoric Ireland. So, you see, you will have an illustrious guest, though he may be as poor as 'Job's turkey.'"

"No; the letter says he has made an immense fortune in the gold mines of Australia, and is coming back to live on his estate."

"When do you expect them?"

"By the next steamer—for this letter was written from New York the day before they were to start."

"Ah!" said the rector.

And **Ran**, having communicated his good news, went home to his Judy.

CHAPTER XXXIX

"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL"

MEANWHILE, Cleve, Palma, their children, servant, and, last and loftiest, The O'Melaghlin were coming over as fast as wind and steam could bring them.

They had unusually fine weather for the whole trip. They made some very pleasant acquaintances, and formed some very fast friendships among their fellow passengers, with whom they were all very popular.

The eccentricities of The O'Melaghlin were endless sources of amusement to the passengers as to our own

party, to whom they were also causes of frequent annoyance.

For instance, O'Melaghlin always addressed Mr. Cleve Stuart as "Wolfscliff." And not infrequently, when he had had too much wine for dinner, the chieftain would hail his friend from across the table as "O'Wolfscliff," or speak of him to another person as "The O'Wolfscliff."

Besides this, he would reiterate, in season and out of season, his injunction that Mr. and Mrs. Cleve Stuart should preserve, inviolate, the secret of his relationship to Mike and Judy.

"Moind ye don't let on to them," he repeated. "I am to be inthrodooed as a frind of your own, claiming, in right of you, the hospitality of Misther and Misthress Randolph Hay. And I am to have a week or tin days to observe me childer before they suspect me. That will lave me find them out as they are widout pritinces. Do ye moind?"

"Oh, yes," Stuart would reply, heartily tired, yet half amused at the man's persistence.

"And yerself will not brathe a syllable that will lave them suspect I'm anything to themselves, Misthress Stuart?" he persevered, turning to Palma.

"Not a syllable, O'Melaghlin," she answered.

This funny persecution ceased for the time, to be renewed as soon as they landed at Liverpool, and continued all the way from that city to York, and from there to Chuxton.

"Not a hint, not a breath, not a look, to bethray to the childer that they behold in me the father of them, and a discindint of the ancient kings of Meath," he said, as the train drew into the Chuxton station.

"'Not a hint, not a breath, not a look' from us shall betray your secret, O'Melaghlin," Cleve assured him.

"No, indeed," Palma added.

"Be the powers, if ye bethray me, I nivir spake to aither of yez again."

"There," said Stuart, as they all rose to leave the train, "there is Mr. Randolph Hay himself come in the barouche to meet us."

"Where?" demanded The O'Melaghlin.

"There, on the other side of the road. That gentleman in the open carriage with the fine bays and the footman in russet livery," replied Cleve, pointing to the "turnout."

"Be the club of Konn! That foine fellow the son-in-law of meself!"

"Yes, indeed!"

"The gintleman that married me Judy when she was a nady orphan, and he didn't suspect she could be the daughter of a hundred kings?"

"The very same."

"Let me at him!" exclaimed The O'Melaghlin, pushing to the front and passing through the crowd on the platform to the side of the barouche, just as Ran got down from his seat to welcome his friends.

"I'm The O'Melaghlin, Misther Hay. And it's proud I am to make the acquaintance of ye. You're a noble man, that ye are—that ye are. Wolfscliff is behoind. I could not wait for him to inthrodooce you. But I'm The O'Melaghlin, and you are Misther Hay!" he exclaimed, seizing the hand of Ran and shaking it to nearly dislocation.

Ran was somewhat dismayed, not knowing how to account for this overwhelming salute that almost deprived him of the power to respond, and say:

"I am very happy to meet you, Mr. O'Melaghlin."

"Misther?" repeated the chief, prompt to take exception to such a common title applied to himself.

But fortunately Stuart came up, shook hands with Ran and then presented Palma, who was warmly welcomed by her cousin.

"And now, Wolfscliff, will ye be afther inthrodooeing Misther Hay to meself?" demanded Ran's father-in-law.

"Pardon, I thought you had," said Stuart.

"Divil a bit could I do that same to his intilligence," replied the other.

"Then I will have that honor," laughed Stuart.

And assuming the courtly dignity of a lord chamberlain at a royal reception, he bowed to the descendant of Irish kings, and with a wave of his hand, to indicate the inferior person, said:

"The O'Melaghlin, of Arghalee, I have the honor to present to you, sir, Mr. Randolph Hay, of Haymore."

Ran bowed very solemnly, conscious now that he stood in the presence of an "eccentric."

"And, sure, meself fales honored in the relationship—I mane the acquaintanceship," graciously replied The O'Me-

laghlin, feeling, however, that he had almost betrayed himself.

"Will you take seats in the carriage now? My servants are here with the break and a van to bring your people and luggage," said Ran.

Cleve bowed and handed Palma to a back seat, and The O'Melaghlin to a place beside her. Then he took a front seat, where Ran joined him, and the barouche started for Haymore Hall.

The drive through the beautiful country, now in the glory of early summer, charmed both Cleve and Palma.

"It is a boundless Garden of Eden!" exclaimed the latter.

But beauty and glory in nature was quite lost on The O'Melaghlin, who employed the time in descanting to his son-in-law upon the ancient royalty and grandeur of the O'Melaghlin until the carriage turned into the park gate, where Longman stood to welcome them.

"There, that was a foine sivin-footer—that retainer of yours, Haymore. Jist such min me ancestor, Roderick O'Melaghlin, last monarch of Meath, had for his bodyguard, armed with spears and battle-axes, iviry man of them," said the chieftain, as the carriage rolled up the avenue toward the house.

When it drew up in front of the Hall, there stood Mike and Judy, the beautiful young pair, as much alike in their dark loveliness as twin brother and sister could possibly be. Both in evening dress; Mike in the conventional black swallowtail and patent leathers, with a sprig of shamrock in his buttonhole in honor of the visitor. Judy in a dark blue satin dress, trained, and with low body and short sleeves, showing the plump neck and round arms, which were now dimly veiled with fine lace and adorned with the Haymore diamonds in honor of the guests.

Behind them stood an array of servants.

"There is your son and daughter, O'Melaghlin," whispered Palma in the ear of the chief, as he sat beside her.

He looked out and saw the beautiful pair, with their lovely faces lighted up now with the joy of expectancy.

"What! thim? You don't mane thim!" he exclaimed, gazing at them.

"Yes, I do. They are Mike and Judy."

"Och! let me at thim—the angels!—the beauties! They

are both the imidge of their mother, me sainted Moira! Let me at thim!"

And with a bound The O'Melaghlin was out of the barouche and tearing up the stairs to the presence of his astonished children.

Forgotten were all his plans of secrecy and covert observation. The father's pride and joy in the Irishman's warm heart overbore all resolutions, and he fell upon his son and daughter with ravenous delight.

"And so ye are me own childer—me Mike and me Judy! And the jewels that ye are!" he exclaimed.

But it was Judy he clasped to his breast and covered with kisses.

"Oh, Mike! Mike! save me!" exclaimed the frightened and distressed daughter.

"Will ye be afther kapin' yer hands to yerself?" exclaimed Mike, who thought the stranger was a maniac, and tried to separate him from the terrified victim. But Mike was no match for The O'Melaghlin.

"Aisv! aisv!" exclaimed the chieftain. "It's jealous ye are of me affection for the sister av ye! But your turn will come nixt, me bhoy!"

Fortunately Ran, to whom Cleve had hastily communicated the now open secret, came hurrying up the stairs, leaving Stuart and Palma for the moment in the barouche.

"Stop! stop! Mike, my lad! The gentleman is your father. Yes, dear Judy, your father. Do not be afraid of him," he exclaimed, coming to the rescue with the explanation.

"Yis, darlint Judy, it's the fayther av ye that's pressin' ye to this throbbin' heart av him! It's the fayther av ye, me foine Mike, that will make ye the lawful heir av the oldest name and richest estate in ould Ireland! Yis, I meant to have kept that same a secret till I had watched the natures av ye both for a wake or two, but me affections were too much for me."

While he spoke he was kissing Judy, patting Mike on the shoulder or embracing them both and holding them together to his breast.

At last, quite overcome by his emotion, he sank down upon the top step and covered his face with his hands to

hide the tears that might have seemed a reproach to the descendant of the warlike monarchs of Meath.

Mike and Judy raised him up with tender care and led him into the hall and thence into the drawing-room, while the old butler, without waiting orders, went and brought a tray with a decanter of brandy and a glass.

The O'Melaghlin saw the elixir of life and revived at the sight.

Meanwhile Ran returned to the barouche to conduct Stuart and Palma to the house.

"He made me and my wife swear by all the saints in Christendom that we would not betray his secret until he himself should give us leave, and lo! he has blurted it out himself," laughed Stuart.

"Yes. He seems a very eccentric person, this unexpected father-in-law of mine. Yet I like what I have seen of him," replied Ran.

"You will like him better. The longer you know him the more you will esteem him. And if you will consider the eccentricities of his fate and fortune, you will understand and forgive the eccentricities of his character," replied Cleve.

And then they followed their host into the house and into the drawing-room, where they found The O'Melaghlin seated on a sofa between his son and daughter, with his left arm around Judy's waist, and in his right hand a wineglass of brandy which he sipped at intervals, while Mike held the decanter ready to replenish the glass when necessary.

But as soon as Ran came in with the Stuarts The O'Melaghlin gave the glass to Judy to hold and went to meet them.

He seized the hand of Ran, and shaking it again cruelly and almost to dislocation, exclaimed:

"Me son-in-law! Me brave, good, thrue bhoys! I have not yet greeted ye, nor wilcomed ye as me son-in-law! But now I will do it, with the highest praise mortal man could give ye. I will say: Haymore, sir, ye are worthy to be the husband of me daughter Judy and the daughter of a thousand kings."

"I thank you, sir. I am sure that is the highest praise you could give me. I hope it is true," gallantly replied Ran.

Servants were at hand to show the guests to their apartments.

Mike did the honors to his father, and accompanied him to the apartments prepared for him.

Judy attended Palma to the beautiful suit of rooms that had been fitted up for Mr. and Mrs. Stuart and their children.

There Judy for the first time made acquaintance with Palma's lovely children, whom she found already on the nursery cot, asleep and attended by the faithful Hatty.

"Why, when did these beauties come? Why have I not seen them before?" demanded Judy.

"They came in the second carriage with Hatty and Josias. I would trust them with those two as confidently as with myself and their father," replied Palma.

"And I was so taken by surprise at the sudden meeting with my father that I forgot even to inquire after the darlings! I beg your little pardons!" said Judy, kneeling by the side of the children's cot and kissing their sleeping faces.

At dinner the newly arrived visitors met the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Campbell, who had been invited to meet them. Jennie—the Countess Dowager of Engelmeed—being in deep mourning for her husband, did not go out or receive visitors.

A week of idleness on the part of all the family followed at Haymore Hall.

After that questions of importance were taken up.

It was decided that The O'Melaghlin, with Mr. and Mrs. Hay and Mr. and Mrs. Stuart and Mike, should set out on an excursion to Arghalee Castle and find lodging at Arghalee Arms, and from that vantage point investigate the ancient ruins and see what could be done toward the successful restoration of the castle, also open negotiations with the duke's legal steward if possible to repurchase all the land that had once constituted the Arghalee estate.

All this was happily effected in the course of a few months—for The O'Melaghlin stopped at nothing in his eager desire to restore the ancient magnificence and splendor of his house; and so he paid twice the worth of the land to get it back, and fabulous sums to the antiquaries and architects to restore the castle and the chapel in all their pristine strength and glory.

The Stuarts remained at Haymore until the last of the summer and then bade affectionate adieus to the Hays and returned to Virginia.

This was the first of many visits, which the Hays often returned.

That autumn Mike was entered as Michael O'Melaghlin, master of Arghalee, in one of the best preparatory colleges in Glasgow.

That winter, when "Burke's Landed Gentry" appeared, under the name of Hay it contained this item:

Hay, Randolph, born January 1, 185—, succeeded his father March 1, 187—, married December 2, 187—, Judith, only daughter of Michael, The O'Melaghlin, Chief of Arghalee, Antrim.

And the anxious soul of Will Walling, when he received a copy of the book with the marked passage, was entirely satisfied.

And New Year's Day brought Ran and Judy a New Year's gift, in the form of a son and heir, which filled the hearts of the parents with bliss.

THE END

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As a historical romance "Darnley" is a book that can be taken up pleasurably again and again, for there is about it that subtle charm which those who are strangers to the works of G. P. R. James have claimed was only to be imparted by Dumas.

If there was nothing more about the work to attract especial attention, the account of the meeting of the kings on the historic "field of the cloth of gold" would entitle the story to the most favorable consideration of every reader.

There is really but little pure romance in this story, for the author has taken care to imagine love passages only between those whom history has credited with having entertained the tender passion one for another, and he succeeds in making such lovers as all the world must love.

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"Windsor Castle" is the story of Henry VIII., Catharine, and Anne Boleyn. "Bluff King Hal," although a well-loved monarch, was none too good a one in many ways. Of all his selfishness and unwarrantable acts, none was more discreditable than his divorce from Catharine, and his marriage to the beautiful Anne Boleyn. The King's love was as brief as it was vehement. Jane Seymour, waiting maid on the Queen, attracted him, and Anne Boleyn was forced to the block to make room for her successor. This romance is one of extreme interest to all readers.

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The reader is charmed with the story of love which forms the thread of the tale, and then impressed with the wealth of detail concerning those times. The picture of the manifold sufferings of the people, is never overdrawn, but painted faithfully and honestly by one who spared neither time nor labor in his efforts to present in this charming love story all that price in blood and tears which the Carolinians paid as their share in the winning of the republic.

Take it all in all, "Horseshoe Robinson" is a work which should be found on every book-shelf, not only because it is a most entertaining story, but because of the wealth of valuable information concerning the colonists which it contains. That it has been brought out once more, well illustrated, is something which will give pleasure to thousands who have long desired an opportunity to read the story again, and to the many who have tried vainly in these latter days to procure a copy that they might read it for the first time.

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THE SPIRIT OF THE BORDER. A Romance of the Early Settlers in the Ohio Valley. By Zane Grey. Cloth, 12mo. with four illustrations by J. Watson Davis. Price, \$1.00.

A book rather out of the ordinary is this "Spirit of the Border." The main thread of the story has to do with the work of the Moravian missionaries in the Ohio Valley. Incidentally the reader is given details of the frontier life of those hardy pioneers who broke the wilderness for the planting of this great nation. Chief among these, as a matter of course, is Lewis Wetzel, one of the most peculiar, and at the same time the most admirable of all the brave men who spent their lives battling with the savage foe, that others might dwell in comparative security.

Details of the establishment and destruction of the Moravian "Village of Peace" are given at some length, and with minute description. The efforts to Christianize the Indians are described as they never have been before, and the author has depicted the characters of the leaders of the several Indian tribes with great care, which of itself will be of interest to the student.

By no means least among the charms of the story are the vivid word-pictures of the thrilling adventures, and the intense paintings of the beauties of nature, as seen in the almost unbroken forests.

It is the spirit of the frontier which is described, and one can by it, perhaps, the better understand why men, and women, too, willingly braved every privation and danger that the westward progress of the star of empire might be the more certain and rapid. A love story, simple and tender, runs through the book.

CAPTAIN BRAND, OF THE SCHOONER CENTIPEDE. By Lieut. Henry A. Wise, U.S.N. (Harry Gringo). Cloth, 12mo. with four illustrations by J. Watson Davis. Price, \$1.00.

The re-publication of this story will please those lovers of sea yarns who delight in so much of the salty flavor of the ocean as can come through the medium of a printed page, for never has a story of the sea and those "who go down in ships" been written by one more familiar with the scenes depicted.

The one book of this gifted author which is best remembered, and which will be read with pleasure for many years to come, is "Captain Brand," who, as the author states on his title page, was a "pirate of eminence in the West Indies." As a sea story pure and simple, "Captain Brand" has never been excelled, and as a story of piratical life, told without the usual embellishments of blood and thunder, it has no equal.

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This most popular novel and thrilling story of early frontier life in Kentucky was originally published in the year 1837. The novel, long out of print, had in its day a phenomenal sale, for its realistic presentation of Indian and frontier life in the early days of settlement in the South, narrated in the tale with all the art of a practiced writer. A very charming love romance runs through the story. This new and tasteful edition of "Nick of the Woods" will be certain to make many new admirers for this enchanting story from Dr. Bird's clever and versatile pen.

GUY FAWKES. A Romance of the Gunpowder Treason. By Wm. Harrison Ainsworth. Cloth, 12mo. with four illustrations by George Cruikshank. Price, \$1.00.

The "Gunpowder Plot" was a modest attempt to blow up Parliament, the King and his Counsellors, James of Scotland, then King of England, was weak-minded and extravagant. He hit upon the efficient scheme of extorting money from the people by imposing taxes on the Catholics. In their natural resentment to this extortion, a handful of bold spirits concluded to overthrow the government. Finally the plotters were arrested, and the King put to torture Guy Fawkes and the other prisoners with royal vigor. A very intense love story runs through the entire romance.

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The character of Captain Brooks, who voluntarily decides to sacrifice his own life in order to save the son of the Englishman, is not among the least of the attractions of this story, which holds the attention of the reader even to the last page. The tribal laws and folk lore of the different tribes of Indians known as the "Five Nations," with which the story is interspersed, shows that the author gave no small amount of study to the work in question, and nowhere else is it shown more plainly than by the skilful manner in which he has interwoven with his plot the "blood" law, which demands a life for a life, whether it be that of the murderer or one of his race.

A more charming story of mingled love and adventure has never been written than "Ticonderoga."

ROB OF THE BOWL : A Story of the Early Days of Maryland. By John P. Kennedy. Cloth, 12mo. with four page illustrations by J. Watson Davis. Price, \$1.00.

It was while he was a member of Congress from Maryland that the noted statesman wrote this story regarding the early history of his native State, and while some critics are inclined to consider "Horse Shoe Robinson" as the best of his works, it is certain that "Rob of the Bowl" stands at the head of the list as a literary production and an authentic exposition of the manners and customs during Lord Baltimore's rule. The greater portion of the action takes place in St. Mary's—the original capital of the State.

As a series of pictures of early colonial life in Maryland, "Rob of the Bowl" has no equal, and the book, having been written by one who had exceptional facilities for gathering material concerning the individual members of the settlements in and about St. Mary's, is a most valuable addition to the history of the State.

The story is full of splendid action, with a charming love story, and a plot that never loosens the grip of its interest to its last page.

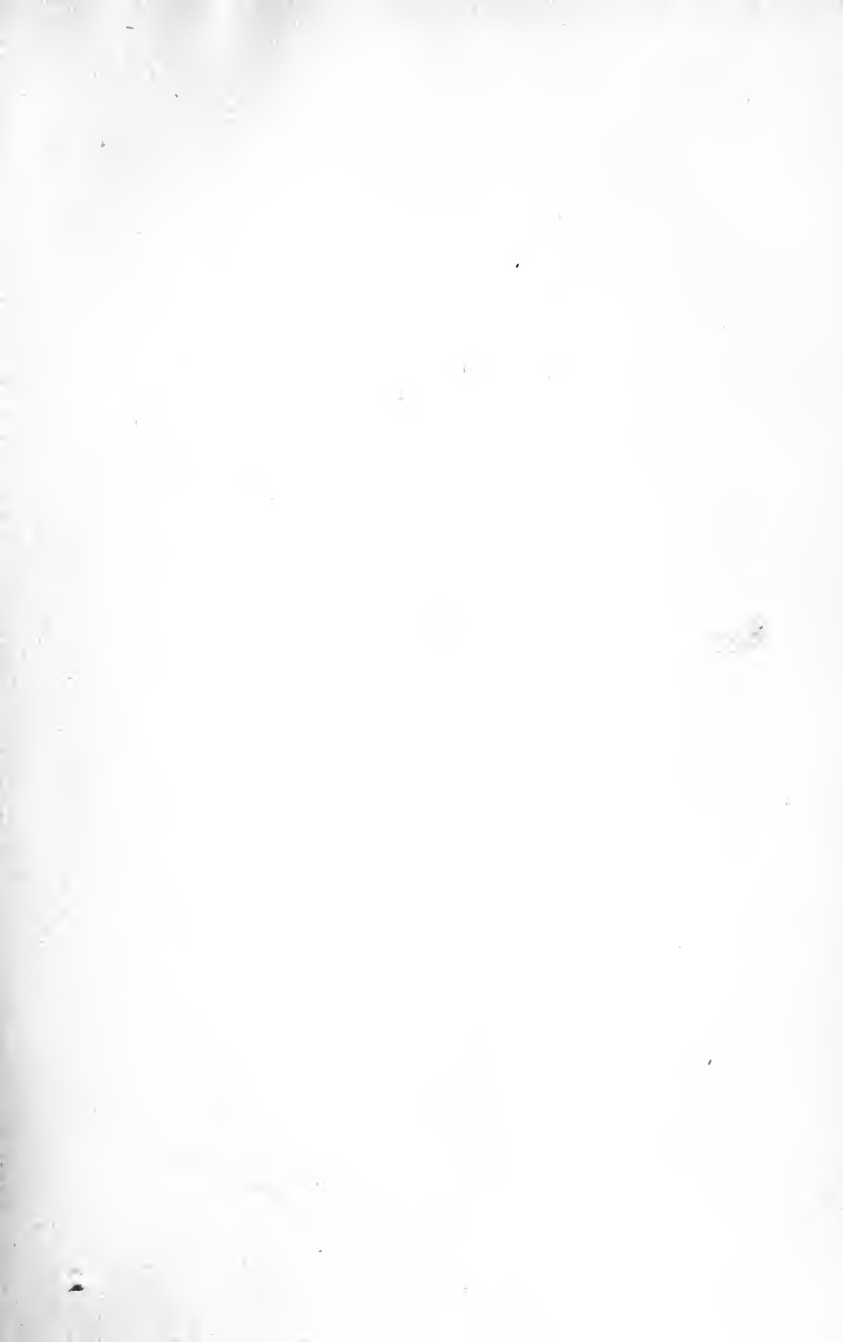
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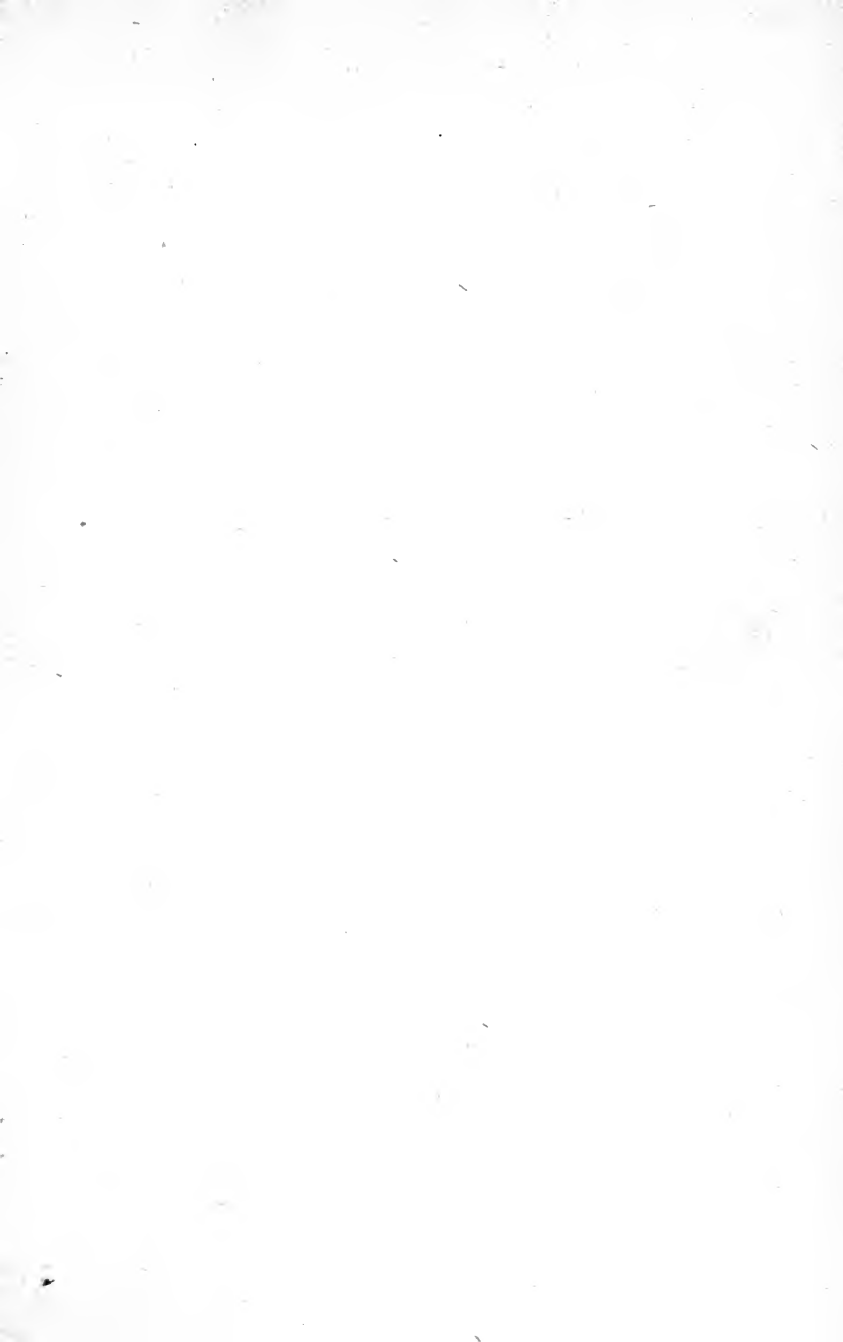
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